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# ГЛАСНОСТЬ

# "OPENNESS"

## Can Gorbachov Change the System?

**George Urban** in a Conversation with **Alain Besançon**

**Nicholas Bethell** in an Interview with **Yuri Orlov**

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## CONTENTS

*Can Gorbachov Change this System?*

Language & Power in Soviet Society — *Alain Besançon, George Urban* — 3

Dog Days (*story*) — *Hilary Mantel* — 15

Column — *M* — 24

POEMS

*John Cameron Burnside 13, Carole Satyamurti 21, John Gurney 22, Li Ch'ing-chao 46, George Szirtes 53, Richard Kell 57, Heather Buck 63, Desmond Graham 76*

NOTES & TOPICS

Paris Notebook — *Jean-François Revel* — 27

Chess Poisoning — *David Spanier* — 31

BOOKS & WRITERS

The Bubble, Reputation — *C. A. R. Hills* — 33

Message from the Back — *Miles Kington* — 38

Fictions of Freedom — *Michael Thorpe* — 42

Books Encountered — *R.M.* — 47

EAST & WEST

Out of the Gulag & into Exile — *Yuri Orlov, Nicholas Bethell* — 48

FROM THE OTHER SHORE

On the Trans-Exhumation of Corpses — *Mstislav Rostropovich* — 54

PRESS

The Correspondent in Moscow — *David Satter* — 58

CONTROVERSY

The Arms Race & Mr Gorbachov — *Richard Perle* — 64

LANGUAGE

From Rape to Rapture — *D. J. Enright* — 69

POINTS OF THE COMPASS

Haiti: The Day of the Exorcists — *Rainer Fabian* — 73

BOXES

Dr Kissinger in Moscow (*Henry Kissinger*) 10, Message from the Ukraine (*Xan Smiley*) 52, My Friend Prokofiev (*Mstislav Rostropovich*) 56, Gorbachov's Glitterati (*Ferdinand Mount*) 60, "We Felled the Tree, but Forgot about the Roots" (*Rainer Fabian*) 75

AUTHORS 72 — LETTERS 77 — LIFE & LETTERS 79

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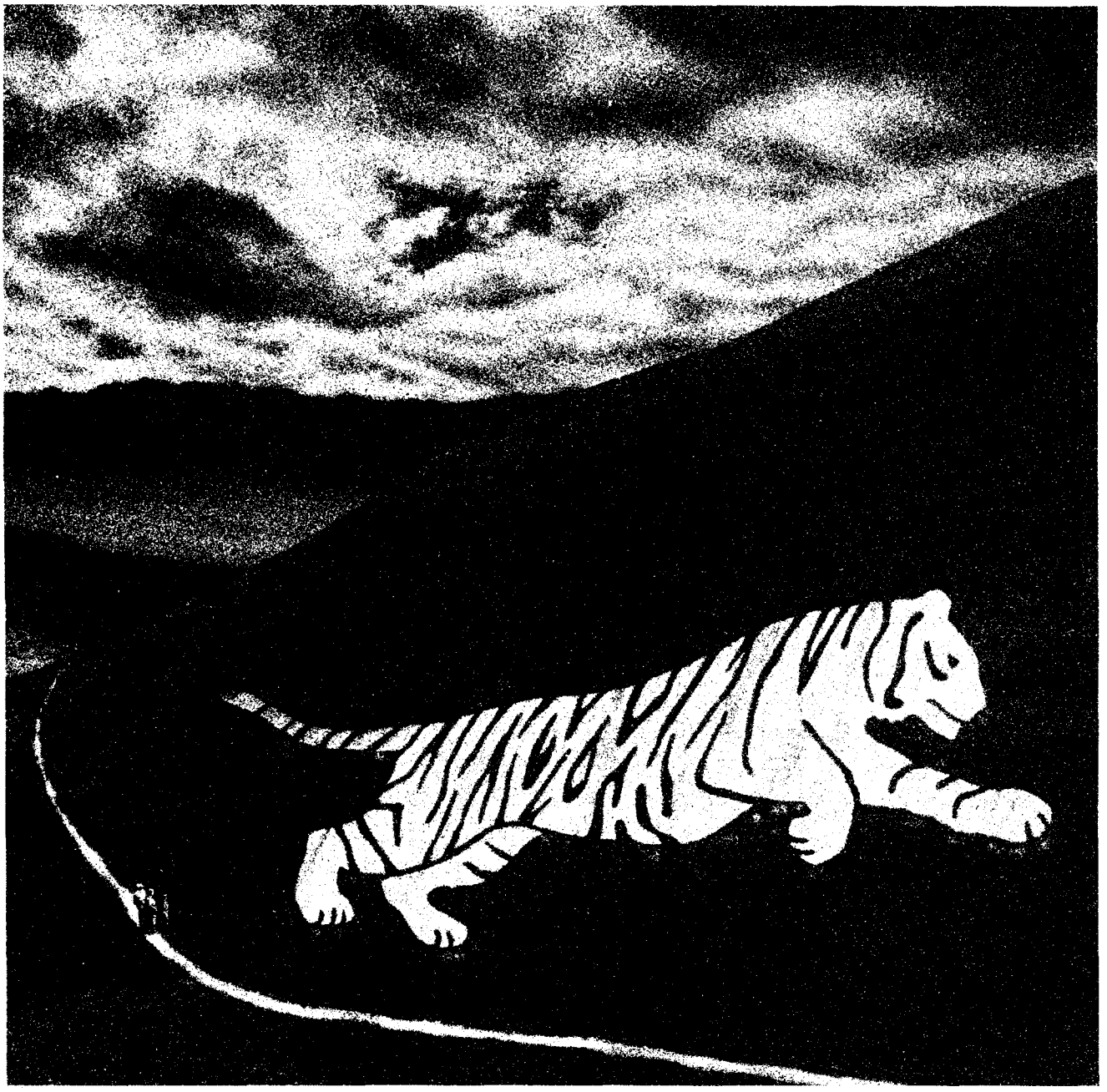

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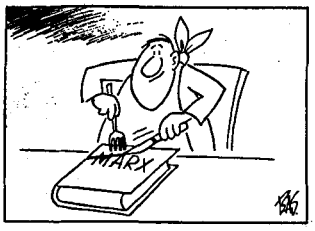
# Language & Power in Soviet Society

## *A Conversation between* ALAIN BESANÇON *&* GEORGE URBAN

### *1. Make-Believe*




URBAN: *My theme is the role of mendacity in totalitarian thinking. Dr Goebbels boasted that "the bigger the lie the more likely it is to be believed. . . ." Solzhenitsyn reminded us that the only means of redeeming the individual from the embrace of the Soviet system is to ask him to "stop lying". One of the slogans most prominently heard on 23 October 1956 in the streets of Budapest was a protest against the mendacity of the official radio station: "the Radio is telling lies* (hazudik a rádió)." *One might, in a sense, describe the Hungarian Revolution as a nationwide protest against the prostitution of the meaning of words and the destruction of the "mental hygiene" of an old European nation.*

*There are many examples in Hungarian life and letters of the good-natured liar lost in the mists of remembrance (János Háry) and of the excusability of poetic licence as a trick no writer dare miss (Arany's "Ars Poetica"). But this roguishness running through some celebrated pages in Hungarian literature has never been the defining characteristic of the temper of Hungarian life. Rather have a search for truth and a consummate sense of honour. Stalinism and the institutionalised Lie that came with it it in 1947-48 had, therefore, a hard row to hoe.*

*The question that interests me most apropos the recent 30th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution has to do with deception and self-deception in totalitarian societies. Is Soviet ideolgy a "falsification" of the real world to fit the power-holders' interests? Or is it another sort of reality which we do not quite understand, even after seven decades of Communism? And, whether it is one or the other, at what point is the official ideology most likely to come unstuck as it did, within a single week, so spectacularly in Hungary?*

BESANÇON: The lie as the essential element of totalitarian control has by now a formidable literature. Boris Souvarine made a famous statement about it as early as 1937, insisting that the lie was the very core of the Soviet system. In a world in which lying is standard behaviour, he said, the lie itself becomes lied upon.

> **"The USSR is the country of the lie, the absolute lie, the integral lie. Stalin and his subjects are always lying, at every moment, under every circumstance, and by dint of lying they no longer even realise that they are lying. Where everything lies, nothing lies. The USSR is nothing but a lie based on fact. In the four words those initials stand for, there are no fewer than four lies. . . ."**

And so on, and so on.

In the early 1920s, much before Souvarine, Eugene Zamyatin, a former Bolshevik, depicted in his novel *We* a horrendous utopia in which a cosmic "Well-Doer" subordinates mankind, and society is run on the lines of a vast railway timetable. Then we have Bulgakov, Solzhenitsyn, and Alexander Zinoviev in our own time. They have all exposed official mendacity as the heart of the system. So did, before them, the Croatian writer Anton Ciliga who wrote *The Country of the Disconcerting Lie* and *The Country of the Great Lie* —both were based on his experiences in the Soviet Union before the Second World War. I need hardly mention George Orwell, who coined "Doublethink", "Newspeak", "Old-

ALAIN BESANÇON *is the Director of L'Ecole des hautes études in Paris, where he teaches Russian history. His publications include "The Confusion of Tongues" (1978), "The Soviet Syndrome" (1978), "The Intellectual Origins of Leninism" (1981), "The Falsification of the Good" (1985), and other works on Soviet culture and society. He writes a regular column for "L'Express". He is the author of various articles in* ENCOUNTER, *including "The Decline of the Sage" (July-August 1986), "To the Left of Mitterrand: The End of the Soviet Mirage" (July 1981), and "The View from East of Eden" (June 1980).*

GEORGE URBAN'S *contributions to* ENCOUNTER *include conversations with Galina Vishnevskaya (December 1986, January 1987), Max M. Kampelman (February 1985), Alexander Zinoviev (April 1984), Jeane Kirkpatrick (November 1983), Eugene V. Rostow (April 1983), Daniel Bell (February 1983), W. Averell Harriman (November 1981), Zbigniew Brzezinski (May 1981), Leszek Kolakowski (January 1981), and Milovan Djilas (December 1979).*



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think", "Crimethought", "Bellyfeel", and so on—words which, as he explained, "not only had in every case a political implication, but were intended to impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them." We are walking on well-trodden ground.

*—It is a nice question whether the Lie, or that intricate network of lies that makes up Soviet ideology is* sui generis, *or whether it has roots in the Russian past. I am struck by a passage in your book "The Intellectual Origins of Leninism" in which you show that 19th-century Slavophilism was, in reality, an unacknowledged import from Germany and France. The Slavophiles, you argue, imported the concept of Nationalism, "removing any labels indicating country of origin". They then proceeded to build a Slavophile "ideology" and turned it against Europe.*

**"They were thus led to construct a fictional reality, a fictional history, a fictional religion and fictional politics in every field."**

*Wasn't this vast tampering-with-reality a precursor of what would happen under the Bolsheviks a hundred years on?*

BESANÇON: Certainly the element of make-believe was common to both, and so was their broad public acceptance. But the Slavophiles were simple falsifiers and plagiarists. They would publish some theological document claiming that it was an old unpublished Orthodox manuscript, whereas in fact the document would be copied from the work of some Tübingen theologian. Their "naturalisation" of German Idealism was a manifest travesty.

In talking about Soviet ideology, however, we face a very different phenomenon. The real question is whether the word "lie" is well chosen to identify what Souvarine, Solzhenitsyn, Zinoviev and others describe as "lies".

"Lie" in its habitual meaning stands for conscious departure from a known reality; it means that the liar is familiar with the truth, and when he departs from it to tell a lie he knows that he is rendering a distorted version of the truth. In ideology you have a different process. You no longer entertain reality against unreality, truth against untruth, but you witness a curious splitting or decomposition of reality itself. You are dealing with two divergent realities—a reality and a pseudo-reality: a reality that you can see and hear and touch, and another that exists purely in your articulations, in language, in propaganda.

To put it quite simply: "socialism" claims to be "scientific". It claims to be able to predict and engineer the future. With the 1917 Revolution socialism was put in power; and it was expected by Lenin and his successors that the theory of socialism would be translated into the reality of socialism precisely because socialism was scientific and all the right conditions had been created for socialism to take off and fly. But socialism refused to happen; it remained a theory in the minds of the Bolsheviks. So how were they to proceed, given the fact that their power was based on the scientific character of socialism—on their alleged ability to monitor the design of history and help it along by putting themselves in phase with its rhythm?

They could only proceed by acting *as if* socialism had really happened. The whole unreality of Soviet ideology is based on the rulers' need to pretend that things exist that do not. Soviet statistics are a fake; the results of the Five-Year Plans are a sham; a Soviet "parliament" never existed; "elections" have never been elections; "the spontaneity of the masses" is the result of meticulous organisation; the tractor girls' "happy life" is a mournful farce; the new "Soviet man" is the old Adam; and so on. Ideology put a smoothing cover over these unpleasant facts. It demanded that people see what wasn't there, and speak as though it existed.

AFTER THE SUPPRESSION *of the Hungarian Revolution Ignazio Silone noted how the Soviet ideological vocabulary had stood reality on its head. His argument of December 1956 is germane to the point you are making.*

**"The worst tyranny of all is that of words. In order to start learning to think honestly once again, we must first tidy up our language. Believe me, that's not easy. For example, why the devil do we keep referring to the Russian army as the 'Soviet' army? In reality, the Soviets disappeared from Russia as early as 1920, and the only soviets that exist in the world at present are precisely the Hungarian revolutionary committees! And they are soviets in the most genuine sense of the word, open, elementary and improvised forms of the people's power in a country where autocracy has prevented the organising of political parties. . . .**

**Nevertheless, in order to be understood by everybody, we too are forced to abide by the current and distorted meaning of words; for example, we have to write: 'the Soviet troops against the Hungarian insurgents', whereas the simplest respect for accuracy would oblige us to write, 'the Russian imperialist troops against the soviets of Hungary'. That's how things stand: *Nomina perdidimus rerum*—we have lost the names of things. . . ."**

BESANÇON: Yes, the best way to describe the unreal language generated by Soviet ideology might be to liken it to a spell or bewitchment. It is an aura and a state of mind as well as a vocabulary. It envelops the whole being of those who are captured by it. It is something akin to what we read in medieval literature about Merlin the Sorcerer; or in the legend of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* about some dark forest from which there is no exit; or some fair princess imprisoned in a magic castle. But then suddenly the spell is lifted and your heroes emerge unscathed.

Communist ideology is like that. It is ephemeral. The bewitchment dissolves; and *hey presto*! you are free, awakened to reality as though you were coming out of a coma or shedding a nightmare. And that is exactly what the people of Hungary experienced in October 1956, the Czechoslovaks in 1968, and the Poles in 1981. They dropped their chains, found their sense of reality unimpaired, and filled the gap between reality and the unreal world in which they had been forced to live without difficulty.

*—But if ideology is so fragile, why is it so robust? For there*

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*can be no doubt that while the bewitchment lasts it has an all-encompassing fascination even for those who resist it. I heard a blistering attack on "Sovietism" by a distinguished German professor at a recent conference. The point that registered with me in his lecture was the extraordinary gusto with which he outlined the post-War successes of Soviet ideology and expansionism before shooting them down as a menace to democracy. He depicted the advantages of having a simple political faith and determined leadership with so much enjoyment that he was in fact paying a backhanded compliment to the ideology he was repudiating.*

BESANÇON: Ideology appeals to some of the ingrained, Manichean, black-and-white predilections of human nature. Soviet ideology shows the world split between good and evil—between the virtues of the coming classless society and the sins of the outgoing capitalist society. You had a parallel dichotomy in Nazism where the conflict was between Jewish "guilt" and Aryan "virtue". For Hitler, the Jew was the fount of all evil, while for the Marxist-Leninist it is "bourgeois" or "capitalist" society. The attribution of guilt for all the world's sins to a single source is as old as the human race itself. Hence its easy penetration even of the minds of men who ought to be immune to it.

In a book I once wrote about this kind of problem (*The Falsification of the Good*) I make the point that all ideological theory is about the identification of evil: what is "the Jew" or what is "capitalism", and how do you locate and eradicate either? Ideology offers a ready recipe. But then a strange thing happens. In trying to eradicate evil you discuss and parade it on the stage of the world, and by so doing you make it look immensely powerful and ubiquitous. Never has evil looked so strong and even attractive as in the act of being struck down. This may explain your professor's eloquence.

But, to come back to the credibility of ideology, so long as ideology is not in power, it is only the ideological theoreticians who live under its spell. It is only they who have to accept unreality as though it were real. But when Communist ideology attains power, ideology has to be checked against reality in very practical ways. At that point the challenge to the Communist power-holders is not to persuade the people that "socialism" is a good thing, but that socialism *exists*. The people must be able to digest the fact that they are prisoners in the sorcerer's castle from which there is no escape.

CAN YOU SEE A WAY *in which the ordinary man—a man who neither has religion to back him nor wants to be a hero or a martyr—can exempt himself from the impact of ideology? Can he withdraw into his inner shell and live "away" from society? Can he construct for himself a world of readings, friendships, art and life-styles that would protect him? We have heard of such cases, but could we offer something like a practical formula for those who want to live at arm's length from official society but don't quite know how?*

BESANÇON: That is a difficult one. The moment the individual accepts the language of the ideology, he allows his mental world and his sense of self-respect to be hijacked along with the language. No matter how inadvertently he may have stumbled into the use of the official vocabulary, he is now part of the ideology and has, in a manner of speaking, entered into a pact with the devil.

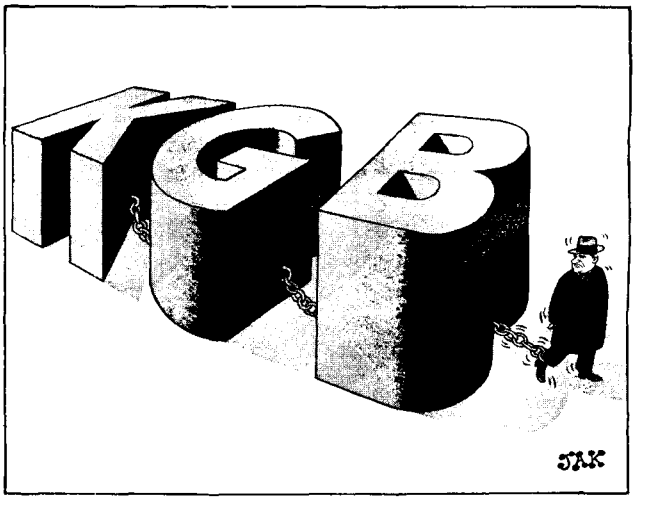
Why do I use such strong words? Because frequently the individual stoops to using the hijacked language only for "official" purposes, the better (as he thinks) to be able to safeguard his private integrity. But this does not work. He soon discovers that, having made one concession in public, he is filled with a sense of shame in private and develops a growing interest in obliterating the duplicity and adopting the language of the ideology in *all* his articulations.

The "internal emigration" that you have mentioned as an alternative to all this is not easy to attain. I suppose it could be done *if* you stopped having any communication and transaction with the State and official society; *if* you were unmarried and had no children, and *if* you were strong enough to live in poverty and become a hermit. And that is what some Soviet individuals have envisaged as an ideal, and have from time to time been able to realise.

But, on the whole, this can be a remedy only for the most exceptional and heroic people—those of unbreakable convictions or a saintly nature.

*—Doesn't religion help as a counter-force? We have much evidence to show that, for example, Baptists and Pentecostalists survived the Gulag in a much beter state of mind than the average political convict. Also, I would have thought the force of Polish Catholicism explains a great deal about the ordinary Pole's immunity to the ideology, even though the Church in Poland stands for a much wider area of loyalties than those we conveniently list under "religion".*

BESANÇON: Well, religious convictions undoubtedly help, but I wouldn't want you to think that I look upon religion as a "counter-ideology". Religion is something you "have" and "believe in". Faith is an act of spiritual loyalty at the deepest level. Communist ideology is different. It does not—or should not—exact an act of faith, because it is supposedly scientific and thus open to demonstration. You do not "believe"

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in ideology—you accept it (if you do) with your rational self as *true*. I would, therefore, not endorse your implication that religion is a counter-force to ideology—a kind of thinking that could, shall we say, invalidate ideology.

The morality that helps us to oppose Communist ideology springs from the very nature of man. The world did not wait for religion to come along to equip us with a moral dimension. It has always been there. Honesty, truthfulness, loyalty are given us with human nature. What I'm saying is that you can (if you can at all) protect your integrity in a Communist system by virtue of your strength of character and natural morality. You don't *have* to be a man of religion.

Let me, however, say in the same breath that a concern with the life of the spirit is one way of building a wall of decency around you and detaching yourself from ideology. Some (a few, I should think) have managed it. For example: a French engineer friend of mine was sent to the Urals to assist in the erection of some factory we had "sold" to the Soviet Union—naturally on French credit. He was forced to live in a human environment that he found so debased and debasing that he could hardly find words to describe it. But one day he met a couple of Jews in this incredible filthy small industrial town in the Urals who observed the Torah, literally from dawn-to-dusk every day of the week—and he found them to be human beings who were untouched by the foulness, the sham, the poverty, and the hijacked language. He could talk to them—they understood each other. But, as I say, you don't have to live the life of a hermit to be able to do that. It is enough to be a decent human being.

IN A SEAMLESS *Orwellian state, I rather suspect that decency would not be enough, because decency has to be supported by some familiarity with the past, the assimilation of certain books, music, and other components of a received culture. In an Orwellian state such as the Chinese during Mao's Cultural Revolution or Cambodia under Pol Pot, the past is abolished and the books are destroyed. In a world of that sort, wouldn't "decency" alone prove too weak a reed to uphold the values of a liberal civilisation? Fortunately, the perfect Orwellian society has so far failed to materialise on Western soil; but Stalin had a frighteningly effective shot at it and Hoxha's Albania went one better.*

BESANÇON: The Soviet leaders have, as you say, never quite managed to create a perfect totalitarian society. They always needed some contact with the past—whether because they needed educated people to carry on the business of government or because they were anxious to endorse their legitimacy by allying themselves with national consciousness.

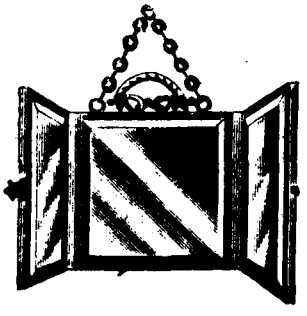
But of course the Soviets realised the dangers of not going flat out for a totalitarian order, and were often torn between using and obliterating the past. One day Dostoevsky was available; then unobtainable; then again available on Soviet bookshelves. The same was true for Pushkin and other classics, both Russian and foreign.

In China under the "Cultural Revolution" and in Pol Pot's Cambodia such considerations were not allowed to interfere with the serious business of "true revolution". Mao's young thugs and the Cambodian bully-boys put the destruction of private libraries high on their list of priorities. They demolished culture and all symbols and artefacts of the "bourgeois" past. The Soviets never quite managed to do that—much less, of course, the régimes in Eastern Europe.

*—There was in Eastern Europe a great deal of "Russification" under Stalin; but nowadays the East European régimes are just as keen on underpinning their legitimacy by reinterpreting the national past and harnessing it to Communist ends as is the Soviet government. In East Germany, Martin Luther, Frederick the Great, Bismarck, and now even German Expressionism of the early years of this century have been marshalled among the natural forebears of Marxism-Leninism. It cannot be long before "primitive Christianity" and "the egalitarian Christ" are deployed to the same ends. Indeed, before the 1968 Prague Spring, some Czech Marxist theologians began to pave the way for that kind of reinterpretation in their dialogue with Western Catholics.*

BESANÇON: The moment you suspend deletion of the past and begin building on it in the hope of imposing a forged version on the public, you are letting yourself in for trouble. Because in so doing you have to preserve the books and look after your churches and monasteries. No matter how heavily footnoted your Tolstoy may then be, the text is there to tell its own story, and the deletion of culture just cannot happen. Rebuilding the royal castles in Warsaw and Buda is a double-edged weapon for the régimes. It could easily boomerang on them; and it most probably will.

## 2. *Integrity in a Corrupt Environment*



LET ME TAKE YOU *back to the question: how does the ordinary man evade the encroachments of ideology if he has neither religion nor the courage of heroism to support him? We have partly answered it by saying that his access to the past, his reading, and his inborn sense of decency might help. These are no doubt some of the necessary conditions of his sanity—but are they sufficient?*

BESANÇON: No, they are not. You have to have contact with people in practical life where common sense prevails—entering into contractual obligations, talking, negotiating, buying and selling, and so on. The logic of these activities is wholesome because they are difficult to ideologise. Then you should have like-minded people around you, friends and acquaintances with whom you can discuss your family problems, your housing, the difficulties of shopping and the like, because in talking about these matters you cannot use the

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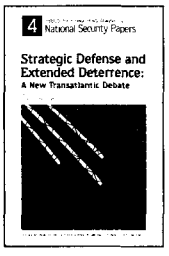
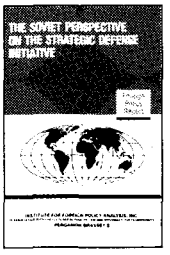
The author of these studies, a former U.S. Army BMD program official, argues that the current focus of SDI research must be modified, so as to place greater emphasis on the development of near-term, rapidly deployable options for the defense of American strategic assets. This effort, which should concentrate on the development of a layered defense at the terminal and late mid-course phases of ballistic missile attack, is held to be a necessary response to the vast scale of Soviet offensive weapons development and to continuing Soviet research and development in the area of strategic defense. In the second volume, the author examines Soviet ATBM developments and the Soviet tactical missile threat, and assesses viable U.S. ATBM options in the near term, including nonnuclear air defense spinoffs from the current U.S. SDI program.




**Strategic Defense and Extended Deterrence: A New Transatlantic Debate.** By Jacquelyn K. Davis and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. 1986. viii, 51pp. $8.00. ISBN 0-89549-070-6.

In this study of President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, the authors examine the relationship between SDI and air defense in the NATO-European security environment; the potential inherent in SDI technologies for conventional defense missions; the participation of allies in the American SDI program; the construction of alternative European frameworks within which to develop anti-tactical ballistic missile defenses; and the Soviet Union's own substantial research program in strategic defense.




**The Soviet Perspective on the Strategic Defense Initiative.** By Dmitry Mikheyev. 1987. xii, 88pp. $9.95. ISBN 0-08-035748-2.

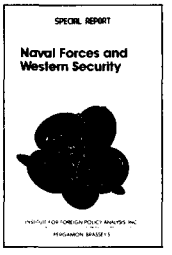
This study of how the Soviet leadership views the U.S. SDI program does not rest on the declarations of the Kremlin but on an analysis of the Soviet political mentality and its influence on the Soviet worldview. The author assesses the technological, economic, political, and ideological implications of the SDI program, likely Soviet reactions to these challenges, and the role SDI might play in the context of a larger U.S. strategy. Dr. Mikheyev, born in the Soviet Union in 1941, received his Ph.D. in Physics from the Moscow State University, was arrested by the KGB and formally charged with treason, served a six-year sentence in a labor camp for political dissidents, was expelled in 1979, and has become an American citizen.

## *Forthcoming:*

**SDI: Has America Told Her Story to the World?** By Dean Godson. 1987. Apprx. 75pp. $9.95.

A special IFPA Panel on Public Diplomacy analyzes official and public reactions to the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative in Western Europe; examines the inadequate U.S. efforts to gain public acceptance for SDI abroad; and recommends specific public diplomacy programs to explain the nature and purpose of SDI in order to win public support in Western Europe for this important Reagan Administration policy.

Orders for these books may be addressed to Pergamon-Brassey's, Headington Hill Hall, Oxford, OX3 OBW, England; or to the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 675 Massachusetts Avenue, 10th Floor, Dept. E-1, Cambridge, MA 02139-3396. On orders to IFPA, please include payment, plus postage and handling charges (to addresses in U.S. and Canada, $1.00 per book; all other countries, $2.00 per book).

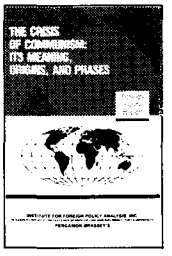



**Naval Forces and Western Security.** By Francis J. West, Jr., Jacquelyn K. Davis, James E. Dougherty, Robert J. Hanks, and Charles M. Perry. 1987. xi, 56pp. $9.95. ISBN 0-08-035543-9.

**NATO's Maritime Strategy: Issues and Developments.** By Norman Friedman, E. F. Gueritz, Clarence A. Robinson, and William R. Van Cleave. 1987. xii, 79pp. $9.95. ISBN 0-08-035544-7.

**NATO's Flanks: Problems and Prospects.** By Donald C. Daniel, Marcel Duval, H.F. Zeiner-Gundersen, Sergio A. Rossi, Gael D. Tarleton, and Milan Vego. 1987. xii, 90pp. $9.95. ISBN 0-08-035545-5.

Recent developments, both in Soviet naval capabilities and Western force postures, have brought renewed attention and analysis to the maritime aspects of NATO security. These volumes, comprised of papers authored by American and European analysts, consider the strategic, operational, and technological impact of the resurgence of naval affairs in Western defense planning.




**The Crisis of Communism: Its Meaning, Origins, and Phases.** By Rett R. Ludwikowski. 1986. xii, 79pp. $9.95. ISBN 0-08-034496-8.

Professor Ludwikowski, formerly Professor of Law and Politics at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland, who left Poland in 1982, examines the economic stagnation, moral decay, social unrest, and bureaucratic inefficiency of communist systems, with special attention to the situation in Poland. He traces the crisis of communism back to the practices and institutions of the Lenin and Stalin eras, and asserts that there is a growing awareness within the communist bloc that the defects of the system are irremediable since they reside in the inherent nature of the communist system.

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wooden language of ideology. The normal morality that goes with this kind of intercourse is a haven of sanity in an ideologised society.

Even foreigners living in the Soviet Union can establish a network of friends and acquaintances of this kind, although they frequently have reason to suspect that their friends are corrupt and inform on them. When I lived in Russia I had quite a few friends whom I cherished; but I knew that some had an obligation to write reports about me for the security authorities. I could, nevertheless, have decent relations with them in various fields of life. In other words, you can protect your integrity by concentrating on the ordinary business of living and having friends and being a friend to others.

*—But what about people who feel they are gifted in, shall we say, the craft of journalism or managing a bureaucracy? If they were to be true to their principles they would have to forgo using their talents because in a Communist society there are no newspapers and no bureaucracies completely outside the control of the state and its ideology. Should they, then, resist making a career in Communist society even though they are unlikely to make one in any other?*

BESANÇON: It very much depends on what kind of a career you envisage for yourself. Clearly, journalism and management are areas where the official ideology is firmly in control. A man anxious to protect his integrity would not, in my view, go in for those careers unless he were prepared to take the consequences for the rest of his life. That is why survival as a decent human being has become a whole art in Communist societies. For example, if you are an historian you will avoid specialising in anything after the middle of the 19th century—you will concentrate your erudition on Byzantine texts and the like, where you are less vulnerable. You are also safe if you are a mathematician—hence the extraordinary number of mathematicians we hear about in the Soviet Union—because figures and theorems are difficult to ideologise. But for a sociologist or psychologist life becomes extremely difficult, and for a philosopher or economist utterly impossible.

*—Here again, mightn't the Russian past help us to see things in perspective? After Czar Nicholas I had suppressed the 1848-49 Hungarian Revolution, his fear that the European ferment might reach Russia was such that philosophy was banned from the university curriculum, and letters signed with the words "all my love" were censored because they implied the denial of proper affection for God and the Czar.*

BESANÇON: Yes, philosophers are, as the word makes clear, "lovers of wisdom", and that is dangerous for despotisms of every kind. *Thinking* is dangerous because you can never tell where it will take you. . . .

*—What you are saying is that in Soviet society you are more likely to survive in value-free occupations—if, that is, there are any. . . .*

BESANÇON: Yes, but even a mathematician works for the state, and there is no telling what the state may demand from him. Suppose he were asked to step down from his ivory tower and make calculations about nuclear fission, or the number of "labourers" it would take to build a canal or reverse some river—he would then suddenly find himself in the embrace of tyranny, even though he might find a hundred ways of convincing himself that he was not.

THE CASES *we have mentioned are somewhat untypical. The majority of people in Communist society are neither historians nor mathematicians. How does the ordinary family man—a man of lazy habits, fond of his drink, not particularly concerned with the state of the world, with a wife and children to support, and exposed to daily propaganda in the official press and television—how does he manage to keep his head above the murky waters of ideology?*

BESANÇON: It would be presumptuous for me to offer a patent remedy, but having seen Soviet society from the inside, let me just say that a man of ordinary decency can do, or avoid doing, several things in order to save his soul from "damnation". He cannot avoid being a member of the Pioneers, or even the *Komsomol* when he is young, but he is relatively free not to join the Party. There is no automatic escalator from the *Komsomol* to the Party. You have to perform certain duties and attract the attention of the right people in order to be

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considered eligible for Party membership. If you do decide to join, this is an expression of your free will. If you don't, that, too, is something you have freely chosen. No one forces you to become a Party member.

*—So not to become a Party member is a kind of automatic barrier against the grosser forms of ideological pollution?*

BESANÇON: Yes, it is. You are in no way predestined to join the Party. If you don't, you simply join that nine-tenths of the Soviet population who are not Party members. You don't *have* to support dictatorship. But, as you rightly hinted, for a man with ambition in his belly it is not always easy to stick to high moral principles. What is it he should avoid doing, in addition to not becoming a Party member?

He should avoid any form of social ambition, because that would attract the attention of the Party and his advancement would become dependent on Party membership. He should avoid asking anything from the State; he should not try to live in Moscow if he is not automatically entitled to it; he should avoid asking for a better apartment, a more interesting job, privileged holidays, a better deal for his children at school, and so on. It's a tall order—too tall for the majority of ordinary people. The traps are many; and I should not want to throw stones at people who have fallen into some of them. You need extraordinary strength of character to avoid them, hence you cannot always criticise Soviet dissidents for not being completely "clean". You don't have to befriend them and you don't have to employ them, but you cannot condemn them without investigating the circumstances.

*—A principle we would, no doubt, want to apply to the members of all totalitarian parties, whether of the Left or the Right?*

BESANÇON: Yes, I'm sure neither of us would want to subscribe to any notion of "collective guilt"; but as in the Soviet case Party membership is largely a matter of choice, former Party members cannot ask us to extend to them the presumption of innocence without showing us why and how they came to join the Party—if, that is, they want to have credibility in the West.

*—What you are saying, and what many Soviet observers such as Amalrik and Zinoviev have been saying for a long time, is that all "Soviet Men" are to some degree infected.*

BESANÇON: Yes, and I can give you a telling example. Jewish people in the Soviet Union form something of an élite, and among them there is an élite within the élite: Jewish scientists, doctors, writers, *et al*. Now, within this élite of the élite there is a *super*-élite: people who are determined enough to face years of harassment, discrimination, and unemployment in order to obtain their exit permits to emigrate to Israel. But once they have arrived there, they frequently cannot find jobs commensurate with their qualifications. Doctors may have to serve as nurses or medical orderlies; physicists may have to teach mathematics in elementary school; and so on. This is, understandably, unpopular. But what my friends in Israel tell me is that this Soviet Jewish super-élite has brought with it all the characteristics of "Soviet Man": they are rude to those serving under them and servile to their superiors. They are demanding and take their new lot without dignity. In brief, they are unable to deport themselves according to the standards and mores of Occidental Man. Now, this is the cream of the élite of Soviet society. What can you expect from the ordinary citizen?

*—The strange thing is that Czechs and Poles and the Chinese do not behave like that in emigration. Soviet Man does. Are we prejudiced in seeing him in this light?*

BESANÇON: I don't think we are. Take the most ideologised and fanatical section of Chinese Communist society—the "Red Guards" who wreaked such terrible havoc during the Cultural Revolution. Many of these young brutes found their way, for one reason or another, to Hong Kong. And how do we find them occupying themselves there? Within weeks they took jobs; they married; sent their wives to work in factories; adjusted to local "capitalist" conditions; and eventually became successful businessmen. Not for them the heritage of ideology, or brooding over the glory that was Mao's China.

Soviet émigrés, by contrast, are mostly misfits throughout their emigration. They live in a state of self-imposed isolation and refuse to learn our language. They fret and storm about in the Western world, letting everyone know who is prepared to listen that Soviet society may be awful but the West is pretty hopeless, too, even though for a different set of reasons.

*—Is this an entirely "Soviet" phenomenon? Some of the 19th-century Russian émigrés behaved in a very similar manner. Herzen's strictures on the inadequacies of the West were no less pointed than are those of Solzhenitsyn. And Alexander Herzen was a "Westerniser" whereas Solzhenitsyn is not.*

BESANÇON: Yes (*pace* Solzhenitsyn), there is a heavy admixture of the Russian heritage in the behaviour of Soviet Man as an émigré. He has brought with him the late 19th-century tradition of *duhovnost* (spirituality), which in the particular context of Russian culture means a salvationist feeling of Orthodoxy, mixed with Russian nationalism. This imbues him with a sense of resignation because his "spirituality" could not and cannot be satisfied. It colours and deepens the malaise he carries with him as Soviet Man.

*THE DIFFERENCES FROM the Chinese are truly astonishing: like the dutiful children of Confucius, the Chinese seek to make good in this world through application and intelligence, while ex-Soviet Man burns the midnight oil in his Parisian attic thinking delightfully hopeless thoughts about the deliverance of his Nation and the ingratitude of the World. I must confess to you that I have a good deal of (perhaps misplaced) admiration for men so passionately given to lost causes, and only one cheer for the practical Chinese.*

BESANÇON: I won't quarrel with you on that score; but let me

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just note in passing that this Russian predilection to despise and evade practical action and, in a sense, all "modernity", and to fret and brood when the workaday world gets in the way of Utopia is, again, very much *pre*-Soviet. It predates *duhovnost* and has to do with Russian religious education in the early decades of the 19th century.

Of course, all 19th-century Russian education was religious, but the Russian education of the time took its special cue from German Idealistic philosophy (Illuminism), adding to it a good dose of thinly disguised Russian nationalism. It taught the young to despise the world of law, the world of money, commerce, industry, and financial self-improvement. Indeed it was hostile to the whole of West European "bourgeois" civilisation. Europe was corrupt, it held, because Europe had given way to the spirit of the Enlightenment and Science, and the United States was a caricature of Europe. It taught that Divine Providence had saved Russia from the destructive impact of both Catholicism and Protestantism, and that it was for the Russian Church to promote the spiritual revival of Europe.

Now, the Soviet intelligentsia, whether in Russia or in emigration, has inherited some of the spirit of 19th-century Russian education. Its contempt for the modern world helps us to understand why the most brilliant and sensitive Russians tend to suffer from a sense of alienation, and why some of them find it so difficult to shed the integument of ideology.

*—There is supposed to be a sense in which the Russian people "enjoy" suffering because suffering seems to equip them with a passport to higher insight and self-respect. Some have asserted this is because the Russians are the world's natural Christians, others because they are natural "slaves".*

BESANÇON: It was the mid-19th-century satirical writer Saltykov-Shchedrin who (writing home from a visit to France) made the remarkable observation: "In Russia things are worse than they are here in France, but, in fact, they are better because we Russians suffer more. . . ." Perhaps they do enjoy hardship.

MIGHTN'T THERE BE *yet another, or an additional explanation? In your book "The Intellectual Origins of Leninism" you tell us apropos your analysis of Nechayev's "The Catechism of the Revolutionary" that there is in the Russian radical tradition not only a communion of saints but also a communion of sinners:*

**"Russian religiosity is ready to believe that there is a community in evil as well as in good, a communion of sinners, just as there is a communion of saints. Which provides a major temptation for adolescent souls."**

*I would have thought the "misunderstood Russian", the "Russian isolated in emigration", the "Russian rejected by the world and nursing his "*Weltschmerz*" would belong to your "communion of sinners"—people who feel elevated by their defection and the challenge they offer to any society. Aren't*

## *Dr Kissinger in Moscow*

IT HAD BEEN **a decade since I last visited the Soviet Union. So it was a bittersweet experience to find that Moscow has not lost its capacity to inspire ambivalence. The seediness of the accommodations had not changed, nor the backwardness of what in the West are considered life's amenities. One remains amazed that a country subsisting at so marginal a standard of living should conduct so assertive a global policy.**

**Yet the surface impression of stagnation was misleading. There is clearly an unprecedented ferment underneath the gloomy surface of wintry Moscow. The new leadership is different.**

THAT THE SOVIET UNION *is now led by so forceful a personality is not an unalloyed blessing. The Brezhnev group seemed exhausted by its experiences in Stalin's purges and in the War. It was—until tempted by American domestic divisions—extremely cautious.*

*Gorbachov and his associates seem less constrained by the past and more assertive with respect to Soviet power. They have the intellectual equipment for a far more dynamic foreign policy than their predecessors. These qualities also make them far more formidable adversaries.*

I EMERGED **from the sojourn in Moscow with six fundamental conclusions:**

**1. "Reform" is in the air. I do not doubt the sincerity of the effort to overcome the stagnation, technological backwardness and corruption of traditional Soviet-style central planning.**

**2. The purpose of that reform is not to spur democracy or freedom; it is to encourage efficiency and industrial progress, hence to make the Soviet Union more powerful.**

**3. So far we are dealing with a programme that has just been announced—with a theory and not yet a practice.**

**4. Even if the programme succeeds it does not automatically guarantee a more benign foreign policy. On the contrary, it may provide additional resources for expansionism and ideological challenges.**

**5. The American scope to influence—or even to evaluate correctly—Soviet internal development is limited. American concessions should therefore be geared to Soviet foreign-policy conduct and not to its domestic economic programme.**

**6. All this imposes on the democracies the necessity of developing a purposeful, long-range and subtle strategy on East-West relations. This is all the more important to prevent the Soviet leaders from using their new-found skill in public relations to manipulate the desire in the democracies for peace.**

*Henry Kissinger*
*in* NEWSWEEK (*New York*)

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*there in the Soviet emigration as well as in the Soviet Union itself a great many people whom one could describe as "outcasts by choice"—men who thrive on the freedoms of the intellectual* franc tireur *and think of themselves as saintly sinners?*

BESANÇON: There is in the Russian philosophical tradition a certain disregard for law, jurisdiction, and even the commonly accepted ethics of society. The 19th-century Russian intellectuals in particular assumed that there was something sublime about challenging and negating the moral code of society. Dostoevsky put the malicious Stavrogin on the fringes of sainthood. The Russian revolutionary atheist was a believer with his faith turned upside down. He belonged, by temperament and language, to the monastic orders.

Now, this was *not* a typically Russian attitude. It stemmed, like so much else in 19th-century Russia, from Germany, but was turned into a provincial caricature under Russian skies. The abstract reflections of Fichte and Schelling became fiery do-it-yourself tracts and pamphlets in the hands of Bakunin, Chernyshevsky, and Nechayev. The Russian Social Democracy and then Communism partook of this tradition. The early Bolsheviks did think of themselves (even if they did not often say so) as a communion of saintly sinners. Today, your displaced dissident, the Soviet intellectual hankering after his "collective" on the Left Bank of Paris, or the Soviet writer living in a state of permanent ennui on the shores of the Starnbergersee does, in a sense, inhabit a psychological world close to the one that bred the Bolsheviks.

***'So I got up from that table with Gorbachev and walked out. And you can imagine my surprise when I found out what we had been talking about.'***

BUT TO COME BACK TO *the Hungarian Revolution—can we identify the point in the life of the Soviet type of ideology where disenchantment sets in and the unreality of the whole construct hits you in the eye? At what stage does it start dawning on the objects of ideology that the whole thing is a sham?*

BESANÇON: Limiting ourselves to Soviet (as distinct from satellite) ideology, we must always bear in mind that, as in judo, our normal reflexes do not apply and we must re-educate them to get the hang of Soviet thinking. If your question means: do the Soviet people believe in ideology, or do the Soviet leaders believe in ideology, or does even Gorbachov himself believe in ideology—then I would have to say this is not a meaningful question. The question in the USSR is not belief but, rather: do they conform with the demands of ideology? do they speak within the framework of the official vocabulary? And my answer to those questions is an unhesitating: Yes, they do, without exception.

That said, one has to ask what precisely is the meaning of that enormous energy expended every day in television, radio, the printed media, schools, factories, offices and so on, by millions of propagandists after almost seven decades of "Socialism"? Why does the régime expect 250 million Soviet citizens to listen to the Party line in which nobody believes? Is it a rational enterprise from the Communist point of view? What does it prove?

Soviet propaganda proves the presence of power. As long as the ordinary man and woman submit to this ritual, they recognise their slavish condition. As long as they do not cry out in anger, "All this is nothing but a vast pack of lies", as long as they obediently mouth the phrases read to them from *Pravda*, they render proof, not only to the régime but to themselves too, that they have been subdued.

*—Again—isn't this a Russian phenemenon? Wouldn't Communism of the Soviet inspiration take a different form in France, for example? When "Eurocommunism" had its heyday in the mid-1970s it was widely believed by Western socialists that in Italian or Spanish (or even French) hands, Marxism-Leninism would turn out to be a more civilised, more democratic and pluralistic affair than it did under Russian auspices. The Italian Eurocommunists even began to talk about a "K factor", meaning the bad odour Italian Communism had acquired from its Russian connection in the perception of Italy's electorate.*

BESANÇON: I don't believe in this theory (and having seen your book on *Eurocommunism* I know that you don't either). Communism in France would be exactly the same as it is in the Soviet Union. As long as there is a French Communist

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Party waiting to climb to power, all you can expect in France is Soviet-style Communism. Look at the objectives depicted in any local Communist bulletin in the provinces—they are in no way different from the objectives and the language used in Communist bulletins in Kabul or Viet Nam. Basically, the same language and the same intellectual-political programmes prevail throughout the Communist world.

*—You don't think French national traditions, history, and culture would have a decisive impact?*

BESANÇON: An impact, yes; a decisive impact, no. One of the characteristics of Communism-in-power is its ability to pick up those traditions in a country's history which are useful to its purpose and which it can parade as having prepared the way for the nation's historical consummation in Communism. In Russia the Bolsheviks could build, as they did, on the Czarist traditions. In China Mao's people used the Imperial heritage. In East Germany Communism exploits the Prussian tradition, and in France—well, there would be a whole big reservoir of happy forerunners from Philip the Fair to the Jacobins and the Napoleonic Prefects.

One of our most sinister pieces of evidence of the uniformity of Communism is the language used in private conversation by Communist leaders of different nations. A French Gaullist and a German Social Democrat in after-dinner conversation would use the ordinary no-nonsense type of down-to-earth vocabulary that they'd use in talking to their car-insurance agent or their tennis partner. Not so the Communist leaders. They use the same wooden language in private conversation as they do in their public articulations. This is, to my mind, a powerful clue to what we can expect from Communist rule in any country.

THERE IS A MASS *of evidence to endorse your observation—my favourite one being Veljko Mićunović's Diary of his years in Moscow where he was Yugoslav Ambassador from 1956-58. Much of his story revolves on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the execution of Imre Nagy and his associates. Mićunović makes a point of showing how the "unorthodox" Khrushchev insisted on using, in their confidential conversations, the standard vocabulary of Soviet propaganda: "socialist camp", "peace offensive", "imperialism", "socialist legality", and the rest were all deployed by Khrushchev in exactly the same manner as he habitually used from the public platform. Mićunović, to show his disagreement, put all such phrases between quotations marks.*[1]

BESANÇON: We should certainly not be astonished. In what other tongue *can* you communicate if you are a Soviet ruler? You are, indeed, selected to be a Soviet ruler *because* that is the language you speak. That language is your sole justification; you couldn't choose another without jeopardising your position.

[1] See, in ENCOUNTER (March 1986), David Floyd, "On Failing to Get Along with the Russians".

Four different languages are in use in Soviet society. One is the "wooden" language of ideology which is the prescribed means of public communication. This we have dealt with. At the other end of the spectrum you have the "natural" language of personal communication—the mother's language with her child; the language of lovers; a friend talking to a friend. Between these come two pseudo-languages: the "pseudo-wooden", which is much used when you want to create the impression that you share the make-believe of the wooden vocabulary but do not make it quite convincing; and the "pseudo-natural", which the Soviet rulers use under certain circumstances to create the impression that they are "like everybody else". Khrushchev was a master of the pseudo-natural. It is also the language Soviet diplomats use when talking to Western diplomats, their objective being to let it be known that they are, really, just like Western officials and can be dealt with on the same assumptions as one Western country uses in its dealings with another. These four languages constitute, to my mind, the linguistic universe of Communism.

LET ME TRY AND TEST *these linguistic groups a little. Clearly, the preservation of your "natural" language is most important. My impression is that as long as people spend most of their time making statements like "I want a loaf of bread" or "I love my husband" or "That roof needs mending", they maintain, as you say, a natural barrier against ideological pollution. But the Communists are not unintelligent. When they demanded from the public that they say "I love Comrade Stalin" or "We love Comrade Rakosi", they were transposing ideology into the kind of natural language the ordinary man could comprehend even though he loathed what he had to say.*

*So my question is: could the régime corrupt and even eliminate natural language too? The ideal thing from a Communist point of view would be to induce people to say (and to feel), "I love dialectical materialism"—and we know that Mao, for example, hated the personalisation of "socialism" and looked upon his own cult as a concession to the standards of a "backward" peasantry.*

*George Orwell tells us in "1984" that the one thing ideology could not touch was the private thinking and private loyalties of individuals. That is the meaning of love between Winston and Julia. But, Orwell asks, would Winston betray Julia if he were put to torture, would Julia betray Winston? Yes, they might. They might be forced to confess. But, "Confession is not betrayal", Julia says. "If they could make me stop loving you—that would be the real betrayal."*

> **" 'They can make you say anything—*anything*—but they can't make you believe it. They can't get inside you.'**
>
> **'No', he said a little more hopefully, 'no; that's quite true. They can't get inside you, if you *feel* that staying human is worth while, even when it can't have any result whatever, you've beaten them.' "**

*Could this kind of loyalty and the natural language expressing it be eliminated by a Mao or a Pol Pot?*

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BESANÇON: I don't think it could, and Orwell does not think so either. By suppressing it the system would be suppressing that part of reality on which it must rely for survival. Soviet society is a parasite on reality and, like all parasites, it needs a body to feed on. It needs people in a certain state of health, in a certain state of education, with a certain intelligence capable of planning and working. To destroy these, too, would be to destroy its very basis of power.

*—Can you envisage some psychological manipulation whereby a man could be induced to think and to say "I love Comrade Stalin" and yet be rendered incapable of saying "I love Julia"?*

BESANÇON: Saying "Yes", thinking "No". "Loving Stalin" was the régime's concession to natural feeling and natural language. The statement "I love Julia" can go together with "I love Comrade Stalin", but it cannot go together with "I love Communism". Stalin was, after all, a real person, a real *Vozdh*. You could "love" him the way people loved the Czar or the Great Khan. I can see no way in which a man could say he loved Stalin but could somehow be so manipulated that he could not feel love for Julia.

*—So the régime's demand that the ordinary man should mouth the phrase "I love Comrade Stalin", or "Death to the traitor Trotsky", is the régime's concession to the ordinary man's humanity, the régime's admission that it has failed to adulterate human nature?*

BESANÇON: Paradoxically, yes. Such, you might say, are the ways of the dialectic.

*(A concluding article will be published next month)*

## My Grandmother's wedding certificate

I remember the rosemary under her porch
and white roses fainting from the wall
one indigo summer.
She had dolls from her childhood in a cabinet
beneath the stairs, and a silk
flower from her wedding cake.
She had scars on her hand from a scalding
twenty years old, and a small hard laugh
that made me think of birds.
I never knew her maiden name till now.

Maiden name. A dream of lace and braids
and heavy horses plodding in the lanes
clouded with leaves.
Grandfather John was a giant of a man
already injured in the colliery
when they walked out.
Their lives throughout were marked with documents,
marriage and birth and death, certificates
of chance.

I think of her house and begin
searching for the vanished animals:
three black dogs in turn, a zebra finch,
the tortoiseshell cat she gathered in her lap
on Sunday afternoons.
We had to feed it when the cancer came.

I remember the night she died.
It rained. I took my turn
to kiss the yellow face and say goodbye.
I thought she was asleep.
Later I watched father writing forms
and cheques. At the funeral
we stood in ranks along the gravel paths
to keep our good shoes dry
while they laid the long brown coffin in the turf
and left it to happen
like a tulip bulb.

*John Cameron Burnside*

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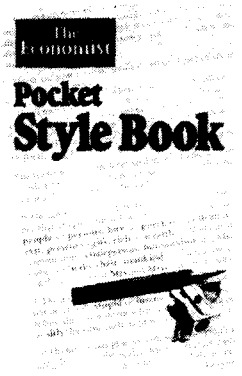
# Four to encounter

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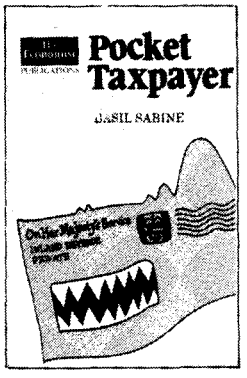


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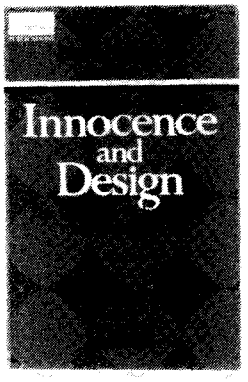


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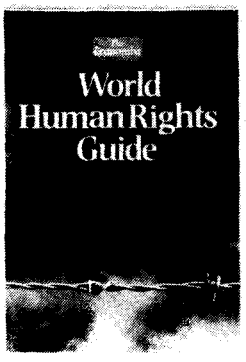


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# *Hilary Mantel*

# *Dog Days*

WE HAD CROSSED the border; Doug said we ought to put the radio on, to take my mind off the pain. I slumped in the corner of the bench seat of the truck, red dust in my hair and under my eyelids. I cupped my right hand around my jaw.

"Toothache's awful", Doug said; like someone who had often heard about it.

There was no point looking at the map. It was a straight road: Swartzruggens, Koster, Derby, Magaliesburg. Doug took his hand from the wheel and patted my knee. "You'll be sorted out tomorrow." He struggled to keep the impatience out of his voice. I slid my body down on the hot leather. I saw us from above, a speeding dot skimming the hot white roads of the Transvaal, in a closed metal box two people deeply at odds; lean couple, meagre pickings, hair bleached and skin roughened, aging fast after half a decade of unsuitable wind and weather. A country music whine filled the cab. Stand by your man, the voice advised. Smile though your jaw is breaking; or words to that effect. And give him all the love you can.

"Why is it", I said indistinctly, "that South Africa thinks it's the Wild West?"

"It is. Gun-law."

"I don't understand these people." So I always said. Cotton wool in my jaw, the words came out a mumble, like an apology. Another voice took over, the same tippytap rhythm and the same nasal twang; prison cell and manly passion, cotton candy and the folks back home. I closed my eyes against the rush of green trees and fields. This landscape made me dizzy; its lushness and ease, and our speed on the metalled road. I had been three weeks in the bush with Doug: camped inside a stockade of thorns, jolting off each morning in a Landrover to see the drilling rig, just for something to do. We slept in another metal box which we called a caravan. At dusk the walls snapped and popped like gunfire, contracting with the night's chill. I said to Doug, I must see a proper dentist. The mosquitoes kept me awake, and the pain in my jaw. Weaver birds put up a condominium; there are trees in the Kalahari. The labourers grumbled and went freelancing, looking for water with divining rods which they made out of bits of scrap metal.

I was only at home long enough to sleep one night and pack a bag. A strip of tarmac, a huddle of bungalows and one-storey public buildings, a railway track and a string of trading stores; this passed for the premier town of the district, and outside it was the principality of mambas and ants, the great desolation of thorn and scrub that stretched northward through the tropic of Capricorn, and westward across disputed frontiers and to the sea. Dry river beds, a purgatory of hills, shabby animals sharpened to the bone by drought; the whole winter country behind me, huts and scant mealie fields, seemed to have been sprinkled with a pall of ash. Each morning dust is swept out of doors by the boxful. It is life long after the eruption; keeping house in Herculaneum.

NOW BOTSWANA lay behind, and at the border post a crisp red-haired official had stamped our passports: MEDICAL, THREE DAYS. "Sleep", Doug suggested. He thought, that will put an end to her half-baked enquiries. My naivety is an irritant to Doug; so are my teeth. It is demoralising, to have to put your wife's molars into the hands of white supremacists.

"And so it's greetings from us here in the studio to all our Boys on the Border, and a special message for you, Phil Snyman, from sister Sherrylee in Vryburg. All her love to you, and when you meet up with boyfriend Gysie, say to him how about that letter you promised? Another 28 days and the family are all waiting, Phil, to welcome you back home to Vryburg, so from Mom and Dad, from Uncle Piet and your cousin Mandy and all the gang, keep your head down, come safe home . . . if tears were miles, she'd be with you now. And here's Johnny Cash. . . ."

"You tend to forget they're a country at war", I said.

"I don't."

"Kitbags", I said. "Going off on lorries. Watching for the postman."

"They have mailboxes."

"Wie einst Lilli Marlene", Doug said.

"Wie einst Sherrylee."

"My heart bleeds." As if I might misunderstand him he added, "I've got no sympathy for them."

"Yes, but you're not selective", I said. "You've got no sympathy for anyone."



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At Swartzruggens we stopped for petrol. Doug climbed out of the truck and stretched himself. He took out his handkerchief and mopped his face. His shirt stuck to his back. "I'm going in the cafe", he said. "You want some samosas? Some chips?" I turned my face away. My sense of humour had failed.

I picked up my bag from the floor of the truck and took out my cotton wool. I unscrewed my miniature of brandy, the cheap local kind called Limousin. Kaffir taxi, people called it; they think it takes the Bantu on the road he wants to go. I took one large swallow, poured the rest on to the cotton wool. Opening my mouth with difficulty, I wedged it gingerly against my gum. I couldn't decide any longer where the pain came from. That was a problem I had, in those days.

Doug reappeared from round the back of the white buildings, zipping his fly. "Don't you want to stretch your legs?" He eased himself with a sigh back into the truck's roasting interior.

"No", I said. "I just want to get to Johannesburg."

AFTER WE HAD SHOWERED and cooled off, and lain in our twin beds, straightening our bodies from the six-hour drive, we put on our clean city clothes and walked out into the dazzling sunlight on Plein Street. "Shall we go uptown?" Doug asked. I thought of sitting in a cafe in Hillbrow, above the empty Sunday streets, and sipping a frosted glass of lemon juice and soda. The pain cowered in a corner of my jaw. I viewed my future rationally; tomorrow morning by ten o'clock I would be at the Dental Hospital, cosseted by its antiseptic gleam, by white-coated competence and novocaine. For the first time I thought of the home I had left in such a hurry, clothes flung into a bag for both of us, instructions gabbled off.

"I hope the dog will be all right", I said. "I hope Rachel feeds him. I hope he doesn't give her any trouble."

"She'll feed him", Doug said. "Or she knows he'll take a bite out of her."

The dog liked flesh. He was not fussy. When Doug was away in the bush and I was left at home I would dust him with flea powder and then let him sleep in the house outside my bedroom. There had been a stabbing in a house on the Zeerust Road. Violence was perpetrated for nothing; a tin of corned beef, a few coppers, a sack of sugar. Some people kept firearms. We had begun with a pickaxe handle by the bedside; now we had the dog. At dawn he would pass his somnolent tongue over my face, and I would let him out to patrol the compound. To the click of his claws on the veranda floor I tumbled back into sleep. When Rachel came at seven from her quarters, his yellow eyes would watch her up the path. "Snapper, Snapper, good morning", Rachel would say. "Dumela, Snapper." Snapper's tail would move: once.

We walked hand in hand, hot, accommodating ourselves to a Sunday pace. Country bumpkins, we stared into the shop windows. At midnight on a Saturday everything stops; Sunday is for the family, for prayer. On Twist Street the part-time soldiers were strutting in their uniforms under the flowering trees; paramilitaries and quasimilitaries and Dads' Armies and Toddlers' Troops, they paraded in immense boots, eating Smarties and flicking the tubes at members of inferior racial groups. The boots alone terrify me, to think of being trodden on by such boots; and that would be the least they would do to you. The pain shot through my jaw again. At the Cinecenta they were showing *Grease* and it was illuminating to see what effect this produced on the straggle of lanky young boys coming out of the park. Their eyes were sullen, their hair slicked; their blunt country-boy faces were as decadent as combine harvesters. "They'll never get it right", Doug said. "You can't be John Travolta *and* Our Boys on the Border."

"I don't know", I said feelingly. It was nine months since I had walked down a paved street. "I don't really know who John Travolta is."

"We'll go shopping when your tooth's fixed", Doug promised. "We'll eat lobsters . . . prawns. We'll get theatre tickets."

"I haven't got a dress."

"You can get a dress. There must be a million dresses in Jo'burg."

Already he was uneasy. Soon his temper would take a turn for the worse. He was torn between his guilt and his wish for a good time, a good time in the big city. Long before we had seen this country, before we saw Africa at all, our judgments had been formed. Johannesburg must have a million dresses easily, and a million blue diamonds winking on the fingers of every check-out girl at the Jet Stores. Faces stare from behind the windows of the segregated buses; Fugard plays at the Market Theatre, torturers come on for the evening shift, and the Miss South Africa contestants chatter in the foyer of the Landdrost Hotel.

"Let's go back", I said. "I want some sleep."

IN THE LOBBY a couple were checking in; red-neck, thin gilt wife. I thought I knew them, but all Afrikaners look the same. As we reached our floor I remembered. "Du Preer", I said, swinging through the fire doors. "From the farm."

Doug sat down on the bed. "Always the same in this place. You always run into someone you know, and it's usually somebody you're trying to avoid. Last time—you remember?—it was that schoolteacher from Kabwe, the one who plays in the string quartet. Christ it's hot in here, I'll have to change my shirt again."

I went over to the air-conditioner and fiddled with the knobs. It was a luxury we didn't have at home. "I didn't know you were trying to avoid Mr du Preer. I thought you were going to give him a piece of your mind."

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Doug had always been an idealist, and he did not believe that biting was in Snapper's genes. If he had conceded that, there is no saying where the concessions would have ended. He wasn't saying that du Preer had trained the puppy; just that the farm's brutal assumptions had crept into the dam's kennel, as the repressions of old Vienna into the cradles of the patients of Freud. "Oops", I said. A blast of cold air hit me in the face. Doug was rummaging in our suitcase. He glared at me, holding a can of deodorant, weighing it in the palm of his hand as if it were a grenade.

"I will give him a piece of my mind", he said. "If I get the chance."

IT WAS A YEAR ago. Mr du Preer pushed back his hat. "Yah, we have puppies. Like it says on the sign. You want to come this way?"

We were five miles outside Zeerust, a twenty-minute drive from the Botswana border; we had been shopping. The back of the truck was full of groceries; his sign had made us turn off the track. We needed a dog. Rachel's quarters had been done over just last week, her blankets stolen and her holy pictures pulled down from the walls. "Must be a Presbyterian", Doug said. The Chief Hydrogeologist's garden boy had gone missing, so, as Doug said, you didn't need to be Miss Marple to work it out. Rachel was talking about going home to the village. I baulked at adding to the pack of racialist brutes that yapped and scrabbled in the gardens of the old colonial houses. But we needed something, Rachel said, "for frightening those boys, tsotsis, hooligans". Sometimes she astonished me with her grasp of the language.

Mr du Preer led us across the farmyard. "Nice place", Doug said. He looked about, taking an intelligent interest, as men try to do. Mr du Preer grunted in a not unfriendly fashion. "My family." There was a horse standing in front of the house, a child astride its back, two others—little tow-haired soldiers—rubbing its ears. It was a patient nag, bending its neck; the picture was wholesome, like the kind of photographic calendar they hang in butcher's shops. The house itself was new, startling and garish in yellow brick and plate-glass. White nets fluttered at each window, as if the suburbs had put out their flags. "I built it myself, and with the help of my boys." He meant his labourers not his sons. English was a struggle, a schoolbook tongue he seldom had to use. "Before that we didn't do so well for a house, this is a small mixed farm as you can see. The dogs are my wife's, she makes her pin-money." From the horse's back the child called out, "Have these people come for puppies?"

Now Mevrouw appeared at the door. She fluttered her fingers at us, and signed to her husband to take us to the dog-pens. She wore a white apron; a shaft of sunlight silvered her rigid perm. "She looks like one of the Stepford Wives", Doug whispered. "Remember that film?" We did get films, once a fortnight, and sometimes they were not so old. Bioscope, they call it here.

I did not want to listen to Doug. I walked ahead of him. I knew he was disappointed that they did not live in a sulphurous pit. I could feel his eyes on the back of my neck, daring me to form one soft opinion. I was always wanting a proper house, with electrical appliances and a herb garden. We had been married seven years then, and we had nothing to show for it but a batch of exotic vaccination certificates.

In a pen behind wire-netting two big puppies tumbled in the dirt and bit at each other. "They're ready to go", Mynheer said. "These cross-breeds we do for the army, make a big dog, very intelligent, a good guard for you."

I looked at Doug to see his liberal reflexes jerking. It was painful to watch, like someone with uncontrollable tics. He caught my eye. "Which one do you want?"

The puppies rolled towards us and stood up side by side against the wire, putting out their bright pink tongues. They looked identical to me, with their tan pot-bellies and infant snarls. I couldn't choose. "That one", I said at last.

"I don't know", Mr du Preer said, "but maybe I should choose the other fella."

"Okay."

He thrust his hand in and pulled the puppy out by its scruff. He shook it gently, growling into its face. Overwhelmed, the puppy closed its eyes in bliss. He put it into my arms. Its muscles were heavy inside its velvet skin. "You train him well. You be strict with him."

Trim in her cotton skirt, his wife came up to join us. "You've picked? Ah, shame", she said to the puppy left behind. "I shall keep you, stupid one. You want to see the sire?"

She led us among the pens to a larger wire run, closed in at the top. "He jumps", she explained. Behind the wire a kind of bear glowered out at us. His jaws moved; his huge head drooped, bowed and furrowed with the slow thoughts of the lifer.

"Doesn't he ever come out?"

"Oh, yah, sometimes", she said. "But he eats the puppies." Her sing-song voice made everything sound pleasant. Du Preer jerked his head at the house. "Offer you a cold beer?" We followed him. The kitchen was half-dark, blinds drawn against the sun. Mrs du Preer swung open the lighted cavern of her refrigerator and pulled out four cans of Prinzbräu. We snapped off the ring pulls and dropped them back into the cans. She pursed her lips, refined as she tossed the lager down her throat; refinement is relative in these lands.

"How long have you been in Botswana?" du Preer asked.

"A year. Before that Zambia."

"Zambia? You have a rough time there?"

"We managed", Doug said.

"And how do you like the blecks?"

The puppy had settled now across one of my feet. He sucked at the bottom of my jeans. Mr du Preer watched

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us narrowly. I felt that if we gave the wrong answer to his question, he might not allow us to have the dog. Doug, beyond comfort, put down his beer on the plastic marble counter-top. He fumbled for his wallet. "Fifty rand, you said?" You buy my dog, you buy my opinions, said the set of du Preer's jaw.

"Myself, I have no dealings with the Tswana, my side of the border or yours. All my boys are Zulu. I grew up with these men, I speak their language. They're intelligent, faithful, they don't mix with the locals. They're too good for them. That's the way I like it."

"Sarel", Mrs du Preer said. "Sarel, don't bother these people now. I'm quite sure these people are nice people."

I finished my beer. "He's not old enough for his rabies jab", Mrs du Preer said. "So when you get to the border, just keep him quiet in the cab, don't say anything, he's got no certificate. But take him to the vet, yah, in a week or two?"

"Yes, sure."

"I'll give him something to keep him quiet." She held the puppy in the crook of her arm and dosed him with syrup, letting him lick the spoon. He scoured his whiskers for the last taste of it. "That's lekker, isn't it?" she asked him. "Sweet", she explained. She handed the puppy over. Her smile was fine-drawn; tired and bitter.

NOW A FACE loomed into my own; receded. Steel rang inside my mouth. The dentist straightened up. "Come and look at this", he invited the nurse. "Bleck dentistry."

She tripped across the tiled floor and peered at me; tittered. I closed my eyes. "Something to relax", said the dentist. A strange pattern of barred sunlight flickered on to the ceiling. I took a deep breath, as if I were going to make a speech. The feeling seemed familiar. I saw the nets blow in the breeze as a white coat flashed, and the weaver birds tangle in the nurse's hair; the marble of the counter-top swirling like the smoke from burning trees. Then the thorns entered my skin. The day sank out of view. I felt, very briefly, a sensation of flight.

SNAPPER DROWSED across the border, and woke up just in time to be acquainted with his own driveway. His legs scrabbled for purchase on Rachel's polished floor. He tumbled down the steps, lay under the hedge of honeysuckle, and fell into a heavy sleep.

Snapper grew. He turned the lid off his barrel of meal and ate a kilo at a time. He stole his meat when the butcher left it on the stoep, his week's ration ready for the freezer. He plundered the neighbour's hencoops and swallowed eggs whole; soft-footed, he caught live birds in the long grass.

Rachel made him her darling. He followed her round as she worked. Sometimes she sang to him, but I do not know in what language. Inhabiting a barren country, she hated (and so did her friends) whatever shared the earth with people: cats and centipedes were for roasting, birds could be stoned from the trees, and anything useless for eating could be killed for sport. Running along the ditches, slashing with a stick at the undergrowth, she raised the mournful frogs, the harmless frogs with their tiny evasive brains. Snapper lunged behind her, destroying them leg by leg. I did not like this, but dogs will chase anything that runs. There was a tree the bloukops favoured, and he waited under it. Round and round in the dust went the great gaudy-headed lizard, spinning in its slow terror. The girls formed a ring around Snapper, the off-duty housemaids, clapping their hands. What a showman! What teeth! How he darts and dives while they cheer him on! The go-away birds bounce in the fig tree, screaming, but he won't, till he's done. He noses the corpse and breaks out of the ring, and flops into the shade, bored with killing and disgusted with success.

The gardener painted a sign that said in Setswana BEWARE OF THE DOG. And then in English for good measure; and PAS OP VIR DIE HOND. And a picture as well, with gaping jaws. All this was unnecessary; Snapper needed no advertisement. When the gardener took off his coat and hung it on a branch Snapper pulled it down and shredded it. There were no more thefts. The butcher's boy refused to call. Dogs smell fear: Africans fear dogs. This was axiomatic. "Snapper's a racialist", Doug said. "He doesn't go after whites."

But it was more complicated than that. A pallid Swedish girl came, a volunteer at the TB clinic. She eyed the dog nervously, pulling away from him her long cotton skirt of missionary print. She badmouthed Mr Botha and the South African government; Snapper seemed to sleep. She was a nice girl, but she didn't know anything. Everything shocked her, and she hadn't been up-country yet. She was still worried about snakebite; she didn't understand the real hazards. Snapper woke, and blundered over to my chair, showing me his feet so that I could take the ticks out of them. I saw her wince. "It's all right", I told her, "I'll wash my hands before I pour the tea." There was a satirical look in Snapper's eye, I thought. It's often the people with no dogs who get tick-fever; and get housebreakers too of course. When the girl stood up to leave, Snapper pounced. She screamed. The dog streaked through the compound with a strip of fabric streaming from his teeth.

"THAT'S IT", SAID THE DENTIST. "If you have any more trouble come first to us, don't let these chaps mess you about." The nurse patted my arm. In the waiting-room Doug welcomed me with a

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smile of relief. He hated illness; weakness of any kind. We went back to the hotel, and I slept the afternoon away.

"Are you coming to the bar?" Doug asked me when I woke.

"What if—", I extracted some lint from between my teeth, "what if you meet Mr du Preer and have to make conversation?"

"I don't have to. I can walk out."

I tried to say something; but it was too much trouble. That morning we'd seen the couple again. They'd placed us too, but instead of stopping to talk they'd nodded and hurried out of the foyer. Mr du Preer was holding his wife's arm tightly, above the elbow. They were not speaking, and avoiding looking at each other. A taxi waited for them beyond the swing-doors. The driver held the door for Mrs du Preer. She got in stiffly, ducking her head; and let it fall on to her chest as they edged out into the traffic.

"Something's wrong", I whispered to Doug. "I think she's ill."

"What?"

"She looks ill to me."

"Oh, that's just like you." Doug stopped at the top of the stairs. He waved his arms, making a scene among the fire extinguishers. Five floors below, the traffic whizzed by. "Goering's got a sore throat", he yelled. "Poor Adolf's cut his finger. What do I bloody care if she's ill? How would you know anyway? You only saw her twice in your life."

"I only need to see people once." My reply came out like a long snuffle, a voice from under a blanket. "You have no imagination. She's only one poor woman. She can't help the system."

I should have known better than that. Doug's face made me wonder how Poor Stupid had turned out, the puppy who got left behind.

"Stop talking", Doug said brutally. "It makes your mouth bleed."

We had just got settled when Mr du Preer came in. He was alone. He stood looking at the kitsch carvings in dark wood, the Dutch colonial armchairs, the nylon velvet pile. It must have been home from home. "You people mind?" He seated himself. "I don't know a soul. We never come here, we go to Rustenburg if we want things. What are you drinking?"

A waiter wearing a tasselled fez brought over a tray. I drank my brandy in the local fashion, poured over ice-cubes and with a splash of Coca Cola; it is a revolting drink, and just what I needed. Mr du Preer had a broad tough face, wind-beaten and creased by strain. "Where is your wife?" I asked. Toothache makes you bold; there are some pains, exquisite and uncomplicated, that confer a kind of immunity. Mr du Preer leaned forward courteously to splash the Coke into my glass for me; and as he did so, he began noisily to cry.

"What did you do to the dog?"

"What?"

Doug put his glass down. He was drunk. Mr du Preer was drunk. I was not sure about myself. "The dog you sold us. You taught him to bite Africans."

"I'm an African", said Mr du Preer. He laughed a little but not too much. "I'm a white African. Don't you people realise, that if you turn me out of where I was born you'll have to give me international aid?"

This seemed specious. "Food aid", Mr du Preer went on. He had been talking of his farm, his marriage, his happier days. Mrs du Preer had gone to Sandton Clinic for investigations, but the fact of the matter was only too bloody obvious, he said.

"I'm ashamed of myself." He rubbed his face.

"You ought to be", Doug said.

"Breaking down in front of strangers. I'm thinking about my boys."

"Boys", Doug said. He only heard about one word in four, it seemed. "At least allow your workers adult status."

"I mean my children." Of course he meant his children. "You people don't know."

DOUG DID KNOW; it was undeniable. Namibia and Soweto, and malnutrition and the accident rate in the mines. Everybody knows. The waiter came in his red fez and picked up our dirty glasses in his fingertips, his eyes impassive, and Mr du Preer signalled to him with one finger to bring another tray and set it down. Doug was talking. What he was saying was only right and fair. Anybody could see the truth of it. He crumpled a fist. It would give him an ulcer, so much truth. I thought it must be at least midnight. Did this bar never close? Something seemed to have happened to my tooth. My face was beginning to throb again. Of course it never closed; we were residents, weren't we? It was strange that the other guests didn't seem to know the time either. There was quite a party going on around us, fingers crushing empty beer cans and the cold moisture glistening on green bottles of Paarlwein, and hard tanned women tripping into the restaurant, and Musak, and faintly from beyond the velvet-pile drapes the smell of charcoal searing meat. "What you say is very interesting, no doubt", Mr du Preer said. "My wife is dying of blood cancer." He got up to go. I got up too. "I am sorry the dog disappointed you in his morals. But he is a South African dog, and it's a damned hard world for him."

I pointed to my jaw. A little blood ran over my tongue. Politic dentistry. I felt speech was required, but I didn't know what to say. "I'm sorry about your wife", I managed.

"Sorry to have imposed on you, man."

I looked at the clock as he went. It was only half-past eight. We sat in silence for a few minutes, then Doug drained his glass and rapped it down on the table. "Time to go", he said. I shared his feeling. But where? Already people were hovering over us, to take our chairs as soon as we stood up.

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When we got back to our room it was already occupied. The bathroom door stood open, and a black man in overalls, whistling cheerfully, was painting the shelf below the mirror. His can of paint was balanced on the lavatory cistern. He nodded to us, and carried on.

Doug padded over the fitted carpet. He looked just like Snapper. He picked up the phone and got the reception desk.

"Why is there a man painting my bathroom? In an occupied room, at nine o'clock at night?"

There was a bleat of incredulity from the receiver. These things do happen, but I have never known why; failure of communication, I suppose. Doug put down the phone with a crash. He padded back to the bathroom. "Move", he said to the man. He leaned over the wash-basin, ran the tap, and splashed cold water over his face. He came back into the room, dripping, clutching a towel. "That drive yesterday. An hour at the border posts. A puncture. Your bloody tooth, why couldn't you get it fixed in England when we were on leave? That fascist with his moribund hausfrau, and now you can't even get into your own bathroom."

"You complained", I said dully. I reached for a Kleenex and dabbed my lips. There was a knock at the door.

"For you", Doug said.

The painter broke off in the middle of a brushstroke. Not looking at us, he collected his equipment. The door closed behind him. Voices were raised in the corridor.

"We said we'd never complain. No matter what awful thing happened in a hotel in South Africa, we'd never complain in case someone lost their job."

"You've found your voice."

"Yes, I took the packing out."

"It's a pity you can't take the packing out of your brain."

I wondered if Snapper had felt so wrong-footed when he pounced on the Swedish girl. But he carried it off by bravado; not Doug. Contempt and wrath are never sustained as selectively as we might like, and I could have told him that a long time ago, but in politics and in marriage it is better to wait until these truths reveal themselves. Doug sat down. He put his head in his hands. "Oh, Africa", he said. For a year the du Preer farm had been in my mind, a little bright bubble of safety. Punctured now. I felt frightened, diminished. I climbed into my twin bed and pulled the covers up to my neck. I lay on my back and fell asleep at once, and dreamed I was in Harrogate.

NEXT DAY we both had terrible hangovers. We wrapped up our business, paid the bill and left. Until we checked out we crept about the hotel avoiding Mr du Preer. I couldn't face seeing him again. I didn't want to know what was happening to his wife. I was aware of a small change that had taken place: a failure of nerve.

The drive home was comfortless. There seemed nothing to look forward to; not even a hot bath, because Rachel wouldn't be expecting us back today and she wouldn't have lit the boiler. We stopped at Swartzruggens again to cool off and pick up some groceries at the Safari Café.

"That's the half-way mark", Doug said, climbing back into the pick-up.

"Oh, I think we've passed that."

Every exchange seemed leaden, layered with things long unsaid. Stones flew away from the wheels, and butterflies danced over the ditches at the side of the road. I was watching him sideways as we clattered through the dorps, his stony face in profile. He was trying to be a good man, and no one ever seemed grateful, least of all me. All this was years ago, of course, in the 'seventies, and some of the people who used to be in Anti-Apartheid have gone into Animal Liberation now. The landscape was changing, back to the dustbowl; birds with ragged wings flapped over the fields.

We drove for the last hour over jolting dirt roads, the setting sun in our eyes; crossed the border. Snapper was waiting beside the truck and leapt about, flailing his great paws.

I WENT down the long path to the end of the garden. I stood awkwardly at the half-open door of Rachel's hut. Rachel sat on the bed in the dim white-washed interior, propped up, half-asleep. I tapped on the door. She woke up, jumped, grinned.

"Madam? The tooth is nice now?"

"Very nice", I said. "Don't get up. I only wanted to let you know we're back. How've you been?"

"Very good, Madam."

"And Snapper. How's he been?"

"Very bad-behaved", Rachel said. She gave me a catalogue of his maulings and mutilations. He has knocked a policeman off his bicycle, he has worried a donkey, he has been to the house of the Puisne Judge and taken away his goose, which he has eaten. Snapper hung about behind me, his head inclined modestly. Rachel often gave him food; his eyes darted about now, in case he were missing any. Disappointed, he plodded behind me towards the house.

Down at the end of the drive Rachel's bunch of mates were swinging on the cattle-gate. They had on the bright woolly hats that they wear in all weathers, and their bright polyester dresses from the Yours and Mine Fashion Store. Dusk was gathering, and the acid greens and blotches of shocking pink were the only colours in the landscape. One of them waved to me. Snapper looked up into my face, and his gaze truanted over the rutted ground to the source of his fun. He began a leisurely progress down the drive. There would be toads, lizards; large grasshoppers if it were a lean evening. The grass seemed alive, chirping and rustling at my feet. A confrontation first; the maids waved their

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sticks, Snapper slid towards them, teeth flashing in the gloom, and they leaped away from the gate and backed off; then came on. Blood sports would soon begin, the chase and the kill. I waited for the sun to drop below the crest of the hill and plunge the scene into darkness. I cannot bear to stay here any longer, I thought; just to stand by. Figures moved across my view in shadowy profile, like moon-walkers. A torch beam crept through the night.

I went into the kitchen and slammed the back door. I leaned against the table. A single tear traced a slow elliptical path down my face and ran into the corner of my mouth. From the dark garden came the sounds of the pursuit. I thought of the puppy, his damask face nuzzling my arm; I thought of his dog days, of the savage leading the savage, the blind leading the blind. The death of innocence is a two-a-penny notion, but this seemed such a bill to face; the interest compounded since before I was born.

I should like to say that, right then, I walked into my bedroom and began to pack. In fact it was three or four months before I left. Snapper stayed with Doug; later he—Snapper I mean—went to live on a farm, where I expect he had more outlet for his talents. I had to travel once more to Jo'burg to get the plane home, but between connections I read a newspaper and when I walked down a carpeted tube into a DC-10 I didn't look back. I was glad to leave Africa. There are some things that corrupt the soul; but how can you tell, until you have seen them, which ones they will be?

## Broken Moon

Twelve, small as six,
strength, movement, hearing
all given in half measure,
my daughter,
child of genetic carelessness,
walks uphill, always.

I watch her morning face;
precocious patience as she hooks each sock,
creeps it up her foot,
aims her jersey like a quoit.
My fingers twitch;
her private frown deters.

Her jokes can sting:
"My life is like dressed crab
—lot of effort, rather little meat."
Yet she delights in seedlings
taking root, finding a fossil,
a surprise dessert.

Chopin will not yield
to her stiff touch;
I hear her cursing.
She paces Bach exactly, firm rounding
of perfect cadences. Somewhere inside
she is dancing a courante.

In dreams she skims the sand,
curls toes into the ooze of pools,
leaps on to stanchions. Awake,
her cousins take her hands;
they lean into the waves, silhouettes,
stick-child between curved sturdiness.

She turns away from stares,
laughs at the boy who asks
if she will find a midget husband.
Ten years ago, cradling her,
I showed her the slice of silver in the sky.
"Moon broken", she said.

*Carole Satyamurti*

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*John Gurney*

# Six Sonnets

## The Chapel of Unrest

Embalmers have developed quite an art,
an expertise—no doubt to calm one's fears—
so subtle that one cannot tell apart
the living from the dead. For it appears
they've read the deep conviction that one feels
that death cannot be permanent, that one
will find, and soon recover, warm and real,
the infant one has lost, the missing son
just absent at the dawn. So when one comes
and enters to identify one's child
the shock is like fulfilment. One becomes
alive again and radiant, almost wild
with joy and expectation, till an arm
descends upon one's shoulder, with its qualm.

## At the Registrar's

The ice itself has turned to a defence
along these streets. The rough suds of the snow
are frozen in the gutter, an offence
to a red eye. I feel I'm split in two.
My head observes the progress of my feet.
In-between is nothing, just a gap
that's open to the wind. I leave the street
and climb up to an office, quietly tap
the hazed glass of a door. An object
has been lost. Its body, though, must go down in
the records. I state its date of birth, eject
the same date of its death. Then stammer, grin.
But why today? It happened, I am sure,
some twenty years ago, or even more.

## The Witness Box

High iron rails surround the witness box,
still pen me in. I stand apart, remote.
No doubt it's quite a normal paradox
that innocence feels guilt. And now my throat
has hoarsened. Like a common murderer
I mutter out the details with a choice
of half-objective words, as, through a blur,
the questions come. I hear my low slow voice
narrating how a child lay on its back,
eyes closed, the skin blue-grey, a stain of blood

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descending from one nostril as a black
sun rose. Then cough. The words have stuck like mud.
One hundred yards away, behind the door,
grey waves are slowly beating on the shore.

## Lectisternium

And now you've placed the toys upon the bed,
a bear with eaten ears, some rattles, rings,
a sort of lectisternium that is spread
through the cold room. It helps one's sufferings.
Things mustn't be suppressed, although a shroud
is smothering our hearts. Inside the wood,
like scraps of fracto-cumulus, old clouds
of snow still haunt the trees. Misunderstood,
I walk as in a dream. Impersonal
I turn my eyes, and look down at the floor.
I seem to see an infant, very small,
that's lying in a distant mortuary drawer.
Its eyes are opened wide. Expressionless,
they stare out at a void of nothingness.

## The Comforter

Now February ends. The clouds express
their visible derision and the wind
puts ice into the attic. None the less
I smile and act compassion, state I find
a bliss in death, a blessing. Saying "Yes",
I keep off the commiserating minds
that add their private burden of distress
by way of consolation, in a blind
attempt to shed their terror. Quietly
I sit, continue lying. I invent
strange messages I say I have received,
angelic intuitions. Patiently
I calm the old and grieving. None is sent
away without a comfort, undeceived.

## Forgotten Children

Afterwards I thought they were a gift
from God, those intimate forewarnings that
would walk me out at evening through the drift
of rain and take me into graveyards seeing what
was lying by the northern churchyard walls
untended and forgotten, the unmarked graves
still showing through the grass. It seemed that all
in time were left abandoned. No one gave
the rotting cross attention, set a cup
to fill with weeds or flowers. There I'd feel
a strange compulsive mourning welling up
like a salt sea: feel disparate, unreal
as a blown ghost. Such things now correlate
with different thoughts. With conscious guilt. With hate.

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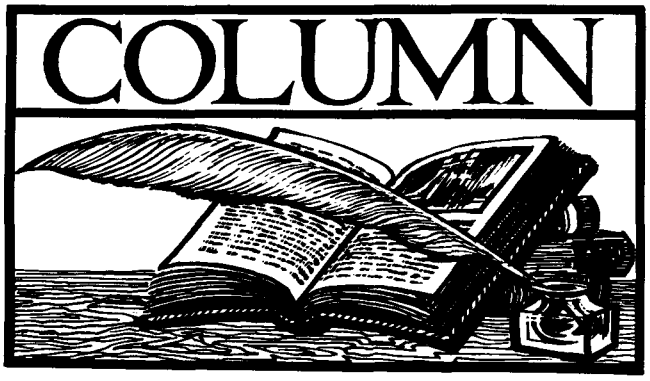


IT'S OFTEN UNNERVING to revisit old haunts. At school, the teachers seem shrunken and mortal, the prefects full of premature aplomb. At the zoo, the cages are cruel and tiny; the sea-lion lake is a grimy pond; the hot body smell of the zebra-house no longer excites, but repels. One's own old home, occupied by strangers, is positively creepy—either a desecration or a soulless clone. Carriage lamps? Two-tone chimes? They've even changed the colour of the front door.

Some places, it's true, seem to welcome one back. Returning to Florence, the heart warms at the sight of the Duomo, that friendly elephant; in Rome, the butterscotch stone of Piazza Navona still glows. But Florence, now, is a bedlam of guided tourists, and Rome's Via Veneto is marred by closed-in cafés. Who was it thought that the Hotel Hassler, in Piazza Trinità dei Monti, took its name from the din, confusion, and danger of the Roman streets?

Brussels, for me, has never exuded quite that brand of equivocal charm. When I first went there, in 1955, it resembled a French provincial city, with old trees on its encircling boulevard, old books in old-fashioned bookshops, and old, slow, ungainly trams. I knew nothing, then, of Belgium's linguistic problem and the passionate rivalry between Flemings and Walloons. "Sleepy" sounded the appropriate word—although the banks, in their stately grey buildings, ought to have reminded me of Conrad's "Heart of Darkness": "high houses, innumerable windows with venetian blinds, a dead silence, grass sprouting between the stones, imposing carriage archways right and left, immense double doors standing ponderously ajar. . . ."

Such buildings still exist in Brussels: one of them still houses the descendant of the company which sent Conrad's Marlow on his voyages. But most of the banks in the city now put one in mind of, say, Baltimore. Plate-glass windows, teak furniture, and rubber plants: they might be expensive florists' shops. For, soon after my first visit, Brussels began to modernise. The trees on the boulevard were felled, to make room for underpasses. The trams became an ingenious part-*métro*. For the 1958 Exhibition, the Atomium was built—a bulbous futuristic molecule, whose ugliness was excused at the time by fallacious comparisons with the Eiffel Tower. And when Euratom and the European Economic Community were installed in Brussels, new office blocks went up, as well as houses and apartments for Eurocrats, diplomatists, reporters, and all manner of lobbies and pressure groups.

Moving then from Luxembourg to Brussels was in part an exercise in future-snobbery. After the placid Grand Duchy, where a few pioneer Eurocrats had run the Coal and Steel Community in wooded surroundings of polyglot Ruritanian seclusion, Brussels was the big city—all demolition and construction, all cosmopolitan affluence, all go. "We're great builders", said one proud Belgian, surveying the mud and bulldozers. "Have you heard hi-fi in stereo?" asked another. It was the very latest thing.

In that 1950s euphoria, "economic growth" was the slogan. The old cycle of regular recessions seemed to have been conquered: every country in Europe could boast its own economic mini-miracle. Harold Macmillan had never said it so good. In Brussels, old buildings now seemed inappropriate, with their creaking parquet, lofty ceilings, and tiny *chambres de bonne* under the eaves. The go-ahead lived in "contemporary" style, as they called it, with Swedish glass and cutlery, airport furniture, nearly square aluminium-framed tilting windows, and bathroom suites in avocado green. Smoking was still a majority habit: cigarillos were popular with both sexes. Young bloods wore coloured waistcoats. "Conservation" was just a word in the dictionary. Cars had tail fins. Crass was it in that dawn to be alive.

I REMEMBERED that mood of modernistic forks and hope when I went back to Brussels, after long absence, a short while ago. Some of its memorials—the once new *Cité administrative*, or the Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée offices built for the European Commission—now had slightly scuffed and sullied appeal, like Terminal Two at Heathrow Airport, or the outside of the Royal Festival Hall. Yet, despite the sadder-and-wiser atmosphere of the 1980s, the city still seemed to be embracing change. The ancient tourist spots in the old town were intact; but around them there appeared to be more pedestrian precincts and more folkloric restaurants offering *menus gastronomiques*. There were several pastiche "pubs" for the influx of British Eurocrats. There was an International Press Centre. And the European Commission had long since moved its main headquarters from the old "contemporary" offices to the far more grandiose Berlaymont building, shaped like a vast cross or star with four curving swept-back arms.

Along its endless corridors—they curve out of sight, and look infinite—identical brown-veneered doors bear numbers and names in cream plastic removable figures and letters. They could be the staterooms of some stranded liner. But behind the doors, amid more teak furniture and rubber plants, I met many old acquaintances. Not quite forty years on, as in the Harrow school song; not at all afar and asunder: but still a generation later—some plumper, some redder in the face, and many grey-haired; yet all curiously youthful, like American actors or bankers who keep themselves in trim.

My excuse for revisiting Brussels was that once again the Community was in crisis. One banker I met there had on his wall a *New-Yorker*-style cartoon. A worried man at a desk is talking into the telephone: "*I'm sorry: you can't speak to the European Community. We're in disarray.*" Situation normal, then. But this time the crisis was financial. Europe's farm policy was running out of funds.



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I remembered very well the arguments over its beginnings. Irreproachable objectives laid down in the European Treaty: to increase productivity, raise farm earnings, stabilise markets, assure supplies, and offer consumers reasonable prices. A governmental conference at Stresa—where delegates were convulsed by a colleague's attempts to water-ski. Tough negotiations, master-minded by a lean, tanned, leathery, pipe-smoking giant of a Dutchman, Sicco Mansholt: Resistance hero, farmer, sailor, former Farm Minister, and in 1958 appointed to the European Commission. His task was to weld together the disparate farm policies of the original six member States—France, Germany, Italy, and the three BENELUX countries, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Eventually, Mansholt succeeded. By early 1962, the most important market systems were in place.

They relied essentially on a variable levy at the Community's external frontier, to bring the price of its imports up to the level of European producers' costs. Being variable, the levy could not be undercut: if an outside supplier dropped his price, the levy went up to thwart him. It meant absolute protection for European farmers. How well or badly they fared, and how much outside suppliers suffered, depended entirely on Community farm prices; and these were set each year by the national Farm Ministers. Price was the only key with which to regulate supply and demand.

EVEN AT THE TIME, this seemed hazardous. The farm policy provided for structural reform as well as price support; but there were few other elements in it. When I suggested concern for the environment, the thought was scotched. The upshot was that the Community achieved a common market in farm products, but at the expense of protectionism. The prices were always set too high.

Many people blamed France—French "peasants"—for high prices: but the truth was that France would have liked many of them low. As it was, they tended to be a compromise between French levels and German, so that both countries had cause for complaint.

In Britain, the CAP or Common Agricultural Policy was commonly regarded as a monstrosity—largely because it was the opposite of Britain's own. Since the repeal of the Corn Laws in the last century, Britain had admitted farm imports virtually free of duty, but had made up farmers' incomes with "deficiency payments" so that they could match the imports' low price. This worked well while world prices were low and stable: but even before joining the Community, Britain had found her system costly, and had started to impose import levies instead.

Nor was Mansholt's policy all that unsuccessful. Among other things, it ensured plentiful supplies, and at prices not wholly outrageous. Above all, in Europe's boom years, when there were jobs in industry, it encouraged many continental farmers to leave the land. Today, the enlarged Community of the Twelve has only 10 or 11 million farmers, compared with 16 million in the Community of the Six a generation ago.

What scuppered the policy in its original form was technology. New crop strains, new pesticides, new chemical fertilisers, and new machinery—all of them boosted productivity beyond the Treaty-makers' wildest dreams. Although there were fewer farmers, European output still went up; and because farmers' prices were guaranteed, the Community had to buy-in any surpluses. Buying-in had been intended as a safety net, a normal regulatory stock system, taking food off the market in times of glut and releasing it in times of shortage, keeping supplies and prices on an even keel. Instead, buying-in surpluses became an ever-growing routine. Some farmers began to produce for the Community's silos and cold stores, and hardly for the market at all. The single key of pricing policy had broken in the lock.

So the Community cast about for other ways to regulate the system. Sicco Mansholt produced another of several "Mansholt Plans", this time to help high-cost producers out of farming. For some products, limits were set on how much the Community would buy-in. And for milk and its derivatives, where the surpluses were horrendous, the member States reluctantly had to impose quotas, individually limiting how much each farmer could produce.

Some generous spirits used to ask why, in a world where the majority is poor and a sizeable number undernourished, Europe's surpluses couldn't be used to feed the Third World. There are several answers, all rather pessimistic. The first is that, yes, some of Europe's surplus grain and sugar—relatively imperishable products—has been used for emergency food aid. Even that is imperfect: it may not reach the right people; it may help prop up dictatorships; it may depress local prices, ruin local farmers, and make the shortages worse. This is not to decry famine relief, but to recognise its limitations. As a systematic dustbin for Europe's surpluses, food aid would be selfishness disguised as altruism. What's more, some products in surplus are unsuitable for Third-World recipients. As baby food, for instance, powdered milk is a costly and dangerous substitute for mothers' milk. It lacks the immunising properties of breast milk; and, if mixed with unboiled polluted water, it can actually kill. The real remedy for Third-World undernourishment, in fact, is to help the hungry to feed themselves.

Moreover, with storage costs which can amount to half the Community's farm budget, Community experts are naturally eager to sell food rather than give it away. They made themselves unpopular at home by selling butter cheaply to the Soviet Union—and have earned still more opprobrium in America, Australia, and New Zealand by subsidising dairy sales to the world market, of which they've cornered more than 50%. Only very recently, to scattered applause, has the Community begun to give away some of its surpluses to poorer people within its own borders—an unusual instance of charity *ending* at home.

MY FRIENDS in the Brussels Eurocracy were wrestling with all these problems when their plans were knocked out of kilter by a further blow. This came from the downward slide of the dollar.

At present, the Community gets two-fifths of its revenue from the levies and duties imposed on imports from the rest of the world. Since these are mostly priced in dollars, a fall

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# SURVEY

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in the dollar's international value means a fall in the Community's receipts. It also involves paying out more, because when world prices (in dollars) fall, the Community's export subsidies have to increase. Caught in this double bind, the Brussels Eurocrats reckon that for the next three or four years the Community's budget will be an annual £10,000 million in the red.

What they propose, to meet the crisis, is a double package of policies. On the farming side, they want a price squeeze, with special measures to reduce output and to help farmers unduly hard pressed. On the budgetary side, they seek more money, but suggest a shift in their sources of revenue, to make each nation's contribution reflect more accurately its relative wealth.

The reactions, so far, have been very mixed. Britain has welcomed the farm-price squeeze, and successfully proposed that parts of Europe's grain prairies should be taken out of production. Germany welcomes such "set-aside" measures, and believes in producing less—yet goes on pressing for even higher prices. France, at last, seems ready to discuss reforming the farm policy, but is much opposed to paying more into the budget. Germany seems willing to pay more, if it gets its way on farm prices. Britain, for the moment, only wants to cut the farm policy's costs.

Meanwhile, at the Uruguay round of world trade negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other food-exporting countries will be badgering the Community to cut its export subsidies and open its market to more imports from outside. Both the US and the Community claim to be willing to discuss all aspects of their farm policies, including domestic support systems. If they really are, what threatens to be a sparring-match could become a joint search for world solutions.

But one piece is still missing from the present jigsaw puzzle: monetary stability. Without it, world prices can slump or rocket, ruining the poor and damaging even the rich. Since 1971, when Richard Nixon floated the dollar, the world has had no real monetary system; and the vast sums now slurping through the markets make parity control more difficult than ever. The Europeans have created the Ecu, or European Currency Unit, as part of their embryonic European Monetary System, or EMS. In private use, for loans, flotations, and even travellers' cheques, the Ecu has developed a powerful life of its own. The EMS, however, has hung fire: Britain has not even joined its exchange-rate machinery.

But just suppose that Britain took the plunge; that Germany, hitherto hesitant, were willing to see the EMS evolve towards a European Federal Reserve; that Europeans and Americans really were to treat agriculture as a world problem and not just a bone of contention; that the farm policy were to become less wholly protectionist; that the European Community were to start spending the bulk of its budget on the majority of its citizens, instead of on the farming minority—what then?

We might all start recovering that 1950s euphoria. And my friends in the Brussels Eurocracy might look more youthful still.

*M*

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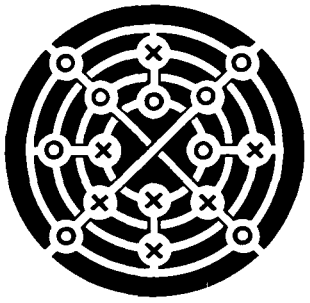
# NOTES & TOPICS

# Paris Notebook

## *By Jean-François Revel*

## "Black Economies": The Liberalism of the Poor



OUR ACADEMIC debate about "liberalism" is astounding in its abstraction. What should one think about a controversy over respiration which covered every angle except the question of how many people breathe efficiently, and how many can live without breathing? "Should we or should we not breathe?" the scholastics inquire. "Should breathing be left to individuals, or become a public sector, or a field regulated by the State, or a State monopoly? . . . On what grounds are the advocates of free respiration arguing? Have they accepted the latest signals given by the voters in some local election? . . . Is respiration a matter of fashion?"

Let us talk less about doctrine and more about practice, less about what modishness would have us profess and more about what really happens. Now, what happens, especially in the economies of the non-Communist Third World, is that free enterprise and the market account for the greater part of national production and trade (if need be, in unofficial ways). So much so that the economy which is mistakenly called "marginal" or "submerged" often involves and feeds the greater part of the population, which has no choice in the matter in any case. In several developing countries, that economy amounts to as much as 70% of economic activity.

These facts are little known because government statistics concerning Third World countries, and even the statistics produced by international bodies—relying as they do upon such data—are commonly in error. They deal only with official, declared activities which are merely a fragment of the whole, and not always the most productive.

So I find it refreshing and illuminating to have a study recently published in Lima, by an independent research institute—an account of the "informal" economy, the concrete fruit of ten years of investigation carried out on the ground by a team under the leadership of the international economist and lawyer Hernando de Soto. Entitled *The Other Path* (*El Otro Sendero*),[1] the book is based mainly on Peruvian data, but its conclusions are corroborated by research in El Salvador and in a large, non-socialist, African country. Thus the case of Peru seems to have quite a broad international application, particularly because it covers a country where a massive experiment in nationalisation was being conducted from 1969 to 1980.

One look at the key figures is a staggering experience. For the *informal sector* in this vast country does not consist only of "odd jobs" and moonlighting. Peru's "informal businessmen" in the black economy do not confine themselves merely to unblocking kitchen sinks (no VAT, please), or painting ceilings on Sundays, or unauthorised street peddling. The combined turnover of their commercial activities is greater than the sum total of the official economy. In the capital city alone, informal business—grey, black or "fringe" (and what a misnomer that turns out to be!)—employs almost half-a-million persons, and operates 83% of the covered and open-air markets. Informal industry manufactures almost the entire range of factory-made goods: furniture, TV sets, washing machines, clothes, kitchen utensils, bricks, cement, electrical plant, shoes, and various tools.

More than that, the unofficials dominate the building industry and public transport. They have built whole neighbourhoods, hundreds of thousands of dwellings, firstly for themselves and then for others (and we are not talking about shanty towns but proper buildings). Half the population of Lima lives in houses built by these unofficial builders. As for public transport, from the shared taxi to the minibus and standard motor bus, if Lima suddenly had to make do with the official municipal transport system alone, 95% of the population would have to walk! In all, some 60% of the country's total working hours are worked in the unofficial sector. And do not confuse this sector with those concealed sweat-shops where a slave-driver boss exploits an underpaid proletariat. It is the Third World's own poor people who build the informal economy—because it is their only way to survive.

HERNANDO DE SOTO and his team conducted their own practical demonstration and experimental verification of the "survival pressures" involved. They asked someone they knew, an ordinary chap, to submit an application for opening a small clothing workshop in accordance with all the usual legal requirements. To get the authorisation, this man had to present his application, and follow it through eleven successive and different ministerial or municipal departments. Ten public servants out of eleven asked for some gratuity. The applicant had been instructed to refuse (so as to find out how long refusal would delay the application). In two cases, however, he was forced to cough up in order to save the dossier from being buried for ever.

It took the would-be garment-maker 289 days of full-time work to complete the assault-course, at a total cost in expenditure and lost working time of roughly $1,231.

[1] *El Otro Sendero*. By HERNANDO DE SOTA *et al.* Preface by MARIO VARGAS LLOSA. Editorial El Barranco (Lima).



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Considering that for the number of days lost this sum comes to exactly 32 times the minimum wage in Peru in 1986, the reader will understand how utterly out of the question it is for almost any member of the active population to start an ordinary small business inside the law.

Other experiments in the same vein confirmed the first one: it took 43 days of manoeuvring and $590.56 to get a street permit to open a fruit-and-vegetable stall. And the crowning glory is the statistic for a group of families trying to buy a piece of waste ground for housing: six years and eleven months of effort. . . . Hence the irresistible rise of "wildcat" enterprises and the informal market. It simply translates the well-known tendency of all creation to cling to life. . . .

Hence also the futility of so much theoretical *bavardage*. Liberalism is first and foremost a kind of spontaneous behaviour—which does not mean that it is always a guarantee of success. But far from being a mere idea or mental construct, it is at the outset a natural reaction of man in society to the material problems that confront him. It is his basic economic behaviour. After that, we can give thought to all the ways and means of intervention which are intended to optimise this behaviour. Sometimes they improve it; more usually they hinder it; but they will never replace it.

THE FACTS SHOW that, contrary to the stereotypes commonly taken for granted, entrepreneurial activity is perhaps above all the resort of the small against the big, and the weak against the strong. And conversely the State, which claims to be the corrector of injustices, usually finishes by throwing the whole of its weight against the small and weak in order to protect the big and strong—by which I mean the political and the bureaucratic classes, big business, oversized armies, and powerful trade unions. To get past these roadblocks, the have-nots are left with no choice but to set off into the unofficial—that is to say, the real—economy.

This is true of the Third World, but not only of the Third World. Let us look closer to home, at the developed countries. The importance of Italy's "underground economy" is well known—it is even itemised (and its financial and other data estimated) in the highly official periodic reports issued by CENSIS (*Centro studi investimenti sociali*).

The Spanish example is no less illuminating. Felipe Gonzalez's government is at present digesting a report which collates the findings of investigations carried out on its behalf by five private institutes for social and economic research. The work cost £400,000 and required 64,000 individual interviews. It reveals that Spain now contains a minimum of 300,000 non-taxpaying small businesses whose annual turnover can be reckoned at around 3,000 billion pesetas (193 pesetas = £1), or roughly a quarter of the real Gross National Product. In regions such as Andalusia and the east coast, the unofficial economy reaches 40% of production. These figures explain a great deal. Otherwise it would be very hard to understand how the social climate in Spain could be so calm—and why workers should vote so generally and reliably for the majority in power if the true rate of unemployment was really as high as the 21.5% recorded by the official statistics.

With the unofficial sector accounting for 25% of the Spanish GNP (and as much as 60 to 70% in the Third World), it can no longer be explained solely in terms of a few petty swindlers trying to defraud the revenue-collectors and evade social security taxation. It is an act of intellectual and political irresponsibility to fail to study the deeper causes. Admittedly, Spain's underground economy ought in theory to be paying hundreds of billions of pesetas to the Treasury every year, and that is a fearful loss to the public purse. But the report contains the clear implication that in Spain, as well as in Peru and Italy, if the fragile enterprises in the underground sector were taxed in the normal way, they could not and would not pay, and would go out of business. The revenue and social security would gain nothing, and society would suffer a loss of tragic dimensions. The proper question for lawmakers to ask themselves is why their laws and regulations should be so heavy-handed that a significant fraction of national production would be condemned to death if they were applied.

What is wrong here, and what should be changed—reality or the law?

It is not only the "micro-economy"; it is also all the recent macro-economic studies which bring out the practical superiority of the market over centralised planning. One of these studies was published in September 1986 by the Washington Worldwatch Institute, a liberal-Leftish foundation originally set up mainly to defend the environment.[2] It shows that between 1960 and 1980 the total agricultural productivity fell by one-third in the USSR, Romania, and Poland, whereas it steadily rose in Western Europe, the United States and Japan, although there it had started from a higher level. The effects in China of reintroducing a few market mechanisms into agriculture speak for themselves: between 1978 and 1985 cereal production increased by one-third, in other words it rose by more in eight years than during the previous 30 years.

I WAS ALSO struck by an interesting fact concerning energy efficiency. In market economies, the quantity of energy used per unit of GNP has fallen spectacularly, whereas waste of energy, paradoxically, has been a feature of the planned economies. There is a simple reason for this: the market calls for lower consumption of energy, now that it is no longer cheap, in order to keep costs competitive. The Hungarian and Romanian centralised economies use twice as much energy per GNP unit as the USA, and five times more than France and Sweden. As a result, the pollution of the environment is more widespread in the Socialist countries. So it is not surprising to discover, as William Chandler writes, that:

> "the trend born with the century towards greater government control is being reversed: seventeen of the twenty most populous countries in the world are setting in motion measures to privatise State industries, relax price controls, and develop competition."

So it is possible to shake off ideology if one is prepared to look at what has really happened. The ideologue strives to

[2] William U. Chandler, *The Changing Role of the Market in National Economies* (Worldwatch Paper 72).

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demonstrate that his system solves every problem. This intellectual absolutism is quite out of date. To take due note of the fact that the market has displayed more vitality and creativity than socialism, and most of all in the poorest countries, does not amount to asserting dogmatically that it always has all the answers, everywhere. Far from it. But at least it does not make the answers radically impossible.

# In Search of Times to Come

MOST PEOPLE, to judge by the fantasies which are spoken and written every day about matters of living or recent fact, do not feel particularly curious about the concrete detail of the present. They take a moderate interest in the past, not so much in terms of its scholarly history but as a silo of ideological dispute. (This is a name commonly given to bellowing sessions during which no shred of an idea in fact intervenes.) So that leaves the future, which offers all sorts of advantages. The study of facts that do not exist is not subject to any process of immediate verification. It is open to no refutation except in the deferred, diluted verdict of the receding future. It is an un-Proustian *recherche du temps à venir*.

No doubt that is why people have always enjoyed conversing about the future, *l'avenir, der Zukunft*. We know that this passion, or rather (why not?) this act of caution, or precaution, has been manifested in the post-War period through the creation of numerous institutes for making forecasts: exponents, in English, of "Futurology", and in French of *la prospective* (a neologism introduced by Gaston Berger in 1957). For half-a-century, governments and businesses have been commissioning reports from these institutes. Bernard Cazes, for many years the head of long-term forecasting for the *Commissariat du Plan* (the French Government's planning office), has had the brilliant idea of applying forecasting to the past, or rather of relating the past of forecasting.[1] Our century did not invent anticipation (or the "literature of anticipation", which is a French name for science fiction).

Before asserting itself in its present guise of a scientific futurology, or striving to apply scientific criteria, what Joseph de Maistre once called "*l'éternelle maladie de l'homme de pénétrer l'avenir* (man's eternal malady of penetrating the future)" assumed a host of other forms. They range from the "divination" of the Ancients to the predictions (now computerised) of astrologers, by way of such ambitious and all-embracing visions of human history as Saint Augustine's *City of God*. Along with a profusion of Utopian literature projecting the authors' ideal society on to the future, we find in the 17th century the first outlines of reasoned forecasting, followed by writers like Turgot and Condorcet who gave a new seriousness and maturity to speculation about the future.

But the philosophers of History, the apostles of industrial development, and the prophets of progress or decadence are not the only figures on display. Bernard Cazes also conducts a shrewd and scholarly tour of the Novel, and of the hundreds of works of the imagination—crazed or clear-sighted, piquant or disturbing—which proliferated in particular after the turn of the 19th century. Alongside the famous writers such as H. G. Wells or Jules Verne, it is a pleasure to discover or rediscover a swarm of forgotten or little-known books, all of them intriguing, and often very amusing or unexpected—take, for example, the American prognostications of Henry Adams, who calculated in 1909 that the age of electricity would last for precisely seventeen years, and then be over.

CAZES ALSO EXPLORES the press. The year 1900 brought a spate of articles on the likely future of human societies in the course of "the next hundred years". Reading them now is an edifying and not necessarily dismaying experience. The "History of the Future" provides what might almost be called an exhaustive survey of the lunatic or rational visions called up in the human mind ever since the dawn of time by the prospect of the unknown future waiting to be known. It is at once a survey and a paper museum: wandering around it, spearing up random tidbits, you constantly come across delicious idiocies or unsuspected insights. The perceptive and the visionary stand side by side. Prophetesses rub shoulders with mathematicians, clear-sighted poets with blind dogmatists. When Panurge, in Rabelais's *Tiers Livre* (1546) assembles a gabble of what we would call experts and forecasters in order to find out whether or not he should marry, underneath the comedy of the scene and the antics of the characters Bernard Cazes detects the classic prototypes of some of the "Consultants" and the "Scenarios" that any Institute of Futurology will now put forward to a "decision-maker" seeking to "optimise" his choice.

IN THIS ENCYCLOPAEDIA of the Future, Bernard Cazes achieves a measure of historical order and logic. The best-known doctrines are the Philosophies of History whose authors boast of formulating the "basic law" (or laws) of the evolution of societies, and claim to have identified its various "stages". Auguste Comte, Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon, Karl Marx, and Herbert Spencer (to name the chief exponents) devised the kinds of system in which the future is portrayed as resulting from a necessary process and sometimes even from one-and-the-same cause. Their type of thinking combines remarkably precise observations, particularly on the subject of the transition into the scientific and industrial era, with more flimsy visionary glimpses of "the final stage" towards which the human race is supposed to be moving.

These insights are not always ridiculous—as with the passage in which Herbert Spencer catches a glimpse of a

[1] *Histoire des futurs*. By BERNARD CAZES. Seghers.

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distant society of leisure and cultural activities, not unlike our own. In less happy cases, Bernard Cazes very rightly defines the genre as a "*discours prophétique à prétention scientifique*". With the Utopians—men like Charles Fourier or Etienne Cabet (whose *Voyage en Icarie* dates from 1840)—it is no longer a matter of waiting for History to give birth of its own accord to the perfect society. The point is to get the inferior society of the present day to conceive the good society of the future urgently, *now* (even if it has to be by forced insemination: and these gentlemen are in any case only too ready to play the stud bull).

I find a particularly entertaining branch of futurology, especially since it runs no risk of disproof, consists in exploring futures which have never existed, in other words imagining how History would have turned out if a given event had had a different outcome—if Napoleon had won at Waterloo, or Joffre had lost at the Marne. This is not an altogether pointless exercise, because it compels us to re-examine the status of the *inéluctabilité rétrospective* which all events acquire once they have actually happened. To christen this genre the 19th-century philosopher Charles Renouvier devised the neologism *uchronia* (on the model of the utopia invented in the 16th century by Thomas More). He called his book *Uchronia, an Apocryphal Historical Sketch of the Development of European Civilisation such as it was not, as it might have been* (1876). (Don't worry: only the title is pleasing; the text is unreadable.) Anglo-Saxon historians have adopted the name of "counterfactual history" for this imaginative exercise.

Since 1945, Futurology has entered what Auguste Comte would have called "the positive stage", as far as has been possible. Forecasting and planning are on the agenda everywhere, even in liberal societies; and they favour the growth of what Bertrand de Jouvenel called "the art of conjecture". Bernard Cazes emphasises that futurology has thus undergone two major transformations, namely "professionalisation" and "institutionalisation". Specialist forecasting institutes—the Rand Corporation, the Hudson Institute, the Club of Rome, etc—have become famous. Annie Battle has now produced a complete guide to these bodies, country by country. I find her *Les Travailleurs du futur*[2] an excellent book and an invaluable research tool. Bernard Cazes lists eight main spheres of activity in modern futurology: the natural environment (or ecosphere); the geopolitical context; world economic growth; demographic behaviour; stock-market changes; technological change; employment; and the role of the State and social welfare.

After a period of vogue, the profession has recently found itself out in the cold, either for proving too optimistic (as with the Hudson Institute) or for excessive pessimism (as with the Club of Rome). At the Versailles Summit in 1982, the French delegation suggested the adoption by the assembled governments of a programme "to develop forecasting and to promote new technologies". President Reagan then quoted an American report of 1937 on technological trends and government policy (commissioned by his White House predecessor, Franklin D. Roosevelt). The report contained no mention of television, plastics, space techniques, the jet plane, the laser. . . . "*Not even this!*", the President concluded, waving his ball-point pen.

Unfortunately we do not cast the futurological eye because it sees accurately, but because we cannot do without it. Charles Fourier saw the truth of it: he wrote that "It is impossible to uproot from the human heart the longing to know the future. . . ."

[2] *Les Travailleurs du futur*. By ANNIE BATTLE. Seghers.

# Why Does Africa Stagnate?

TWENTY YEARS AGO, the "economic development" experts and world opinion in general were diagnosing what Gunnar Myrdal called "the Asian Drama" as a tragedy almost past redemption. At the same time they saw a fairly rosy future for Africa as it emerged from the colonial era. It is true that René Dumont referred to a "false start in Africa", and that critical sociologists asked: "Can Black Africa ever get started?" The fact remains that, in the words of one accepted European authority on these problems, Gilbert Etienne, "at the moment of the national independence of African states south of the Sahara, the experts were liable to say: 'At least the people can eat their fill here—it's not like India'. . . ."[1]

The Club of Rome echoed the same diagnosis a few years later. In 1969 a report by the Pearson Commission (a study group sponsored by McNamara's World Bank) saw South Korea as being "condemned to permanent dependence on foreign aid, with no potential to achieve a higher growth-rate by its own efforts. . . ." Five years later, the South Korean growth-rate had reached an annual cruising speed which held at somewhere between 5-10%, and sometimes more. Today, India has signed grain-export agreements with the USSR and Romania; Thailand sells rice to China; Indonesia's granaries are full to overflowing. Food shortage is permanent in South-east Asia only in Viet Nam and Cambodia, and intermittent only in Bangladesh. In twenty years, the Asian population has risen by 50% and food production per head of the population by 20%. In Black Africa, on the other hand, this same figure of food production per head has *fallen* by at least 20% in the last fifteen years. These various statistics are at once damning and reassuring; for if Asia has emerged so utterly unexpectedly from an apparently hopeless situation, why should suffering Africa not do the same?

What are the causes of the slump in Africa, and what possible ways out are available? Drought has unquestionably spread further in the last twenty years than in the previous

[1] *Asie-Afrique, greniers vides, greniers pleins*. A collective study, prepared by SYLVIE BRUNEL. Editions Economica.

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two decades; but if that may account for fluctuations in output, it does not explain the constant regular decline, which has been going on for a quarter-of-a-century, whatever the rainfall. Often more devastating than the ravages of drought have been armed conflicts or repressive régimes, exterminating or driving into exile whole sections of populations. This was, or still is, the case in Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Madagascar, Uganda, Guinea, and the Sudan.

While some of the blame must fall on the backward state of agricultural techniques—even, for example, the obstinate peasant resistance in some regions to the use of ploughs—the havoc caused by mistaken agricultural policies dictated by national leaderships is more damaging. By authoritarian fixing of low purchase-prices, taxing local farm products and thus holding agriculture to ransom in order to subsidise industry and to provide cheap food for town-dwellers, the nations of sub-Saharan Africa have strangled output and increased their dependence upon imports.

Contrary to a widespread myth, African poverty does not stem from having sacrificed food crops to commercial export crops "in order to swell the coffers of the Multinationals". Both types of crop have declined at once.

In volume per capita, Africa's export of agricultural products is less than it was in 1970, and often less than it was in 1960. Africa has lost a considerable share of world markets in favour of Asia or Latin America. To take the spectacular example of palm oil: in 1975, 73% of world output came from Africa; in 1980 Africa's share was down to 27%, and it was Asia that accounted for 68% of world production. Nigeria, which in the early 1960s was the world's premier exporter of palm oil, became an *importer* in the 1980s. . . .

Another example is the world market in bananas: Africa had 11% of that market in 1960; by the early 1980s it had less than 4%. The world market is now dominated by Latin America and the Philippines.

The output of cocoa, coffee, and cotton has similarly dwindled in Africa since 1970. So it is significant that the most distressed continent in the Third World is precisely the one where the production of crops for export has collapsed.

WHY? TANZANIAN-STYLE socialism, for example, has consisted of moving peasants out of their homes and into collective villages. Recalcitrants were thrown in prison and their huts bulldozed flat. Naturally, output collapsed. It fell by 27% in the space of a generation. As one World Bank expert has written: "The continent is afflicted by failed agricultural projects, State farms which become recruitment agencies rather than productive units." To this can be added the monopoly status of the public bodies in charge of marketing farm produce. In particular the cereal boards, overstaffed and badly run by a venal, incompetent bureaucracy, have had a clearly deterrent effect on the peasants, who are fed up with having to deliver their cereals at prices three or four times lower than the normal rate.

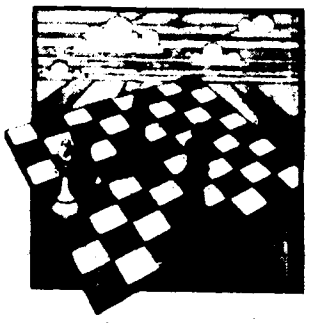
In fact, as African Economics Ministers (who met in Addis Ababa in May 1985) were honest enough to recognise, it is high time to change over to an African kind of liberalism. As it happens, the only countries in Black Africa where the rise in output since Independence has been slightly greater than the growth in population are those whose governments have been the least *dirigiste* and have given greater rein to the free play of market forces: the Ivory Coast, Kenya, and Cameroon.

All in all, there is some small comfort in being able to conclude that at the root of Africa's troubles we seem to find more human political errors than natural geographical fatalities; for after all it is (in theory) a less difficult job to correct the errors than to change the elements.

*J.-F.R.*

# Chess Poisoning

## *By David Spanier*



ON THE NIGHT I went to *Chess* (at London's Prince Edward theatre) one of the final games in the recent world chess championship was being played. The Kasparov-Karpov battle was being transmitted electronically, blow by blow, from Leningrad to London, which shows that even the most ancient of games can be presented in modern guise; and, that being so, why not chess in yet another dimension, a musical?

All the same, it required quite a conscious effort on my part to break away from the television screen—the players' scores in the world championship were level at that point and, as they say in football reporting, there was everything to play for. Still . . . a good whiff of real life on stage was calculated to blow away the attenuated algebraic notation of the television screen.

But a funny thing happened on my way to the theatre . . . or shortly afterwards. As the evening went on, a feeling of disembodiment, probably akin to levitation, took hold of me. My body, undoubtedly, was in the theatre, and there was my expensive ticket stub to prove it; but my mind was elsewhere, irresistibly drawn to the other distant drama, being played out silently a couple of thousand miles away. Somehow that encounter seemed infinitely more real.

It is hard to convey the sheer emptiness of *Chess* the musical, and harder still, perhaps, to explain why it should be that way. The principal author, Tim Rice, is known to be fond of chess; it was his enthusiasm for the game which led him to devise the musical, and he probably plays (indeed it's very likely) a far stronger game than I do.

Yet *Chess* is not about chess at all. Heaven alone knows (or perhaps Caissa, the goddess of chess, intervened out of spite) how the author achieved this feat of prestidigitation, a dis-

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appearing act if ever there was one. The lyrics are all about chess and chess playing: the décor with its illuminated chess boards reflects the game from every angle; the "story", initially, is modelled closely on various well-known events in modern chess—Bobby Fischer's fixation is a prime motif, another is the defection from Russia of Viktor Korchnoi; the players on stage go on a lot about chess; and various game positions are played through in lights.

But of chess as chess—the royal game that exerts its hold over people, the unique quality that makes it an art and a science as well as a sport, what sets it apart, its essential nature, what it feels like. . . . Nothing! In that sense the chess in *Chess* is just a blank. One appreciates the difficulty. Chess is all in the mind: there is nothing much to watch on the board, unless the game is speeded up, as in the television presentations on BBC 2 and Channel 4; but to bring the game alive in the theatre was, precisely, the challenge of taking on this subject in the first place. A challenge that was not exactly unaided, given the resources of orchestra, lighting, scenery and players, let alone the "book".

Perhaps as an enthusiastic player and follower of the game I am too demanding. The proper question is: what is *Chess* like as a musical? And the short answer is: strident and empty. Great pains are taken to establish in the opening numbers the rivalry of the principal players, one American, one Russian—loosely modelled on Fischer and Korchnoi—with a plethora of real-life detail (one embarrassingly bad pastiche, all lederhosen and pinafores, takes place in Merano in Italy, where a Karpov-Korchnoi world championship bout was once played). After that, the story moves off in a totally different direction .

A love affair! Yes, folks, the Soviet player falls for the American player's girl! Check and mate, you might say. Now I am not suggesting that chess players do not from time to time fall in love, occasionally with each other's inamorata. But if this is the story-line, as it turns out it is, if this is what gives the piece its momentum, why all the journalistic detail about chess in real life, as if putting news reports into heavy doggerel? For the "love story", stagey as it is, could be between any two kinds of people—bricklayers, high-wire acrobats, it wouldn't matter. So long as the piece conveyed something about the lives and feelings of bricklayers or acrobats, one would say "Bravo! A tale worth the singing!" But it is hard to see the point of a musical about chess players if it gives the audience as little about chess as a ship in a bottle gives one about sailing.

WHAT, THEN, should a chess musical be about? I am not a librettist, still less a dramatist, but anyone can see (in outline at least) the essential theme. It should have been the pull, the tug-of-war, between the hero's fascination with chess and his allegiance to life beyond the 64 squares of the board—the struggle between love of the game for the game's sake, and love of his girl or wife and family to win him back. . . . In short, a musical story of an obsession. ("I'm just a p-a-w-n-n-n in your heart. . . ." Reprise: "Winning . . . is the world to me. . . ." Chorus: "Check, check, check!")

All right, so I'm not a song-writer either. But couldn't the composers have taken a cue from the best book in English (or Russian, presumably) about chess? Namely, Vladimir Nabokov's little masterpiece "The Defence". That story, about a grandmaster losing his hold on "real" life in the infinitely more compelling other-world of chess, says so much about the obsessional side of the game—"chess poisoning", to take Stefan Zweig's quaint term for it in his best-known story, "The Royal Game".

Thus Nabokov, presenting in an unforgettable image his ill-fated chess player as a child, a boy who did not run about with other boys . . . listless . . . undistinguished . . . until that inevitable day came:

> "when the whole world suddenly went dark, as if someone had thrown a switch, and in the darkness only one thing remained brilliantly lit, a newborn wonder, a dazzling islet on which his whole life was destined to be concentrated."

The promoters of *Chess* should have looked to the world of imagination, not real life, for their inspiration.

Perhaps the explanation for the emptiness at the heart of *Chess* the musical is not simply that it is rather difficult to write in any inward way about chess (which it is) but that the idea of "chess poisoning" for a big musical would never get off the back of an envelope after lunch, wouldn't attract the requisite backing and finance. Musicals are expensive. It cost £4m to put *Chess* on, which is about one hundred times the amount of money put up by the biggest commercial sponsor of chess in Britain in a year.

The chess-in-real-life aspect of the piece which cost such a lot to stage turns out to be irrelevant except as a kind of show-biz backcloth. The references to chess are all part of the media hype, which help provide a "theme", get the project talked about in the gossip columns and around town, like the real-life love-life of the stars. The rest, as the commentators sometimes say in annotating won games, is a matter of technique.

AND THERE a word of tribute is due: the piece seems to be spectacularly popular. The public who go to these media-musicals are pouring in, seats are booked well into the autumn—whatever the purists may say, it's a box-office hit. The hollow core has been filled to the brim by glitter, noise, advance publicity. The female lead, for whom the chess players contend, is a media creation whose private life is reported far more widely, and in that sense is more real to the audience, than any performance she might give, however strident; and the music is by the '70s pop group *Abba*.

This show has been packaged for success. All of the £4m, no doubt, will come back, and more. So why should anyone complain? Because chess is a special and interesting and valuable game . . . and it might have been worth while to give the public a glimpse, under the strobe lights, of what chess is about.

I am glad to report, finally, that when I got back after the show Kasparov had clinched the win.

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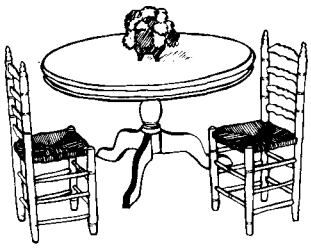
# The Bubble, Reputation

## *The Decline & Rise of Barbara Pym*—By C. A. R. Hills



Barbara Pym's extraordinary publishing history has been much discussed: the decade as a published novelist in the 1950s, then rejection by her publisher and sixteen years in the wilderness, followed by triumphant rediscovery and rapidly growing interest.

Only a decade ago her obscurity was so total that scarcely a literary study or reference work mentioned her name. Now, everyone at all interested in English writing has heard of Barbara Pym, will associate her with novels about High Church Anglican parishes and unmarried ladies of a certain age, but will not always be convinced that they ought to read her. Her work has collected a large body of devoted, some have said excessive, admirers, while continuing to face considerable coolness from many who for long were content to ignore it. Seven years after her death in 1980, opinion is still divided.

The story is certainly odd. For sixteen years publishers again and again reject as unsaleable novels which many of them privately admire; yet immediately one of her novels—which one publisher's reader believed to have been written by a depressed social worker trying to cheer herself up—is published, it is short-listed for the Booker Prize, and there is a rush to reprint and paperback the whole series.

This bizarre history makes it seem hardly likely that, as some have suggested, we have here simply one of the numerous band of purveyors of well-written, middle-class "women's fiction"—E. H. Young, F. M. Mayor, Olivia Manning, Pamela Hansford Johnson—only now more celebrated than the rest because an extravagant reaction set in against her previous rejection. The world rarely imposes silence on an established writer without some reason.

The suspicion grows that there is something potentially *embarrassing* about Barbara Pym, that what superficially seems innocuous is in fact original and thought-provoking, that behind the cheery vicarage-party jokes and pieces of white fish in string bags lies a power to disturb and annoy.

How could a sceptic be persuaded to read Barbara Pym?[1] One central feature of her novels is their concentration on the small surface details of experience, and on the uneventful lives of obscure people, but rendered with an ability to make the commonplace intensely interesting. They achieve this partly through the creation of a distinctive fictional world, faithful to experience and yet subtly distorted through art, and partly through the expression of a complex outlook. The most important component of this outlook, despite its chronicles of disappointment and loneliness, its full appreciation of small poignancies, is a sense of absurdity and high-spirited comedy. No pomposity, no commonplace assumption about the world, is safe: almost every quiet sentence seems to tremble with a smile.

Comedy is a way of mastering the world. The mild, gently hopeless people of the diminishing Church communities that Barbara Pym celebrates are troubled sometimes by a sense of inadequacy: they may be unmarried or unloved, they may do obscure and pointless jobs. The impression that might overwhelm such a character at retirement, for instance that a life's work has been rather useless, could potentially make for painful writing. Barbara Pym does not lose sight of that perspective, yet she makes of it something more:

> "The (acting) deputy assistant director, who had been commanded to make the presentation speech, wasn't quite sure what it was that Miss Crowe and Miss Ivory did or had done during their working life. The activities of their department seemed to be shrouded in mystery—something to do with records or filing, it was thought, nobody knew for certain, but it was evidently 'women's work', the kind of thing that could easily be replaced by a computer. The most significant thing about it was that nobody was replacing them, indeed the whole department

[1] Barbara Pym's published works comprise the novels *Some Tame Gazelle* (1950), Jonathan Cape, £8.95; Grafton Books, £2.50; *Excellent Women* (1952), Cape, £8.95; Penguin, £2.50; *Jane and Prudence* (1953), Cape, £8.95; Grafton, £2.50; *Less than Angels* (1955), Grafton, £1.95; *A Glass of Blessings* (1958), Penguin, £2.50; *No Fond Return of Love* (1961), Cape, £8.95; Grafton, £1.95; *Quartet in Autumn* (1977), Macmillan, £8.95; Grafton, £1.95; *The Sweet Dove Died* (1978), Grafton, £2.50; *A Few Green Leaves* (1980), Macmillan, £5.95; Grafton, £1.95; *An Unsuitable Attachment* (1982), Macmillan, £7.95; Grafton, £2.50; *Crampton Hodnet* (1985), Macmillan, £8.95; Grafton, £2.50; *An Academic Question* (1986), Macmillan, £9.95; and the autobiographical volume *A Very Private Eye* (1984), Macmillan, £12.95; Grafton, £2.95.



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was being phased out and only being kept on until the men working in it reached retirement age. Yet, under the influence of a quick swig of sherry, even this unpromising material could be used to good effect.

The deputy assistant director stepped into the middle of the room and began to speak.

'The point about Miss Crowe and Miss Ivory, whom we are met together to honour today, is that nobody knows exactly, or has ever known exactly, what it is that they do', he declared boldly. 'They have been—they *are*—the kind of people who work quietly and secretly, doing good by stealth, as it were. *Good*, do I hear you ask? Yes, good, I repeat, and good I mean. In these days of industrial unrest it is people like Miss Ivory and Miss Crowe'—the names seemed to have got reversed, but presumably it didn't matter—'who are an example to us all. We shall miss them very much, so much that nobody has been found to replace them. . . .'"

IN THE LATER NOVELS of Barbara Pym (the passage above is from *Quartet in Autumn*, published in 1977), an astringent note has become part of the comedy, which would be out of place in her more purely high-spirited work of the 1950s. In these earlier books, Barbara Pym's thirty-ish single or unenthusiastically-married gentlewomen and the unsatisfactory, pettish males who characteristically form the object of their emotional interests delicately investigate the possibility of emotional contact with each other in long passages of slightly stylised dialogue suggesting a more innocently ironical Ivy Compton-Burnett. The effect created by these comedies of the unattached life is an unusual one: what seems to be communicated most strongly is not gloom, but a strange, radiant contentment, a sense of happiness at the opportunities for pleasure and consolation that life offers.

But such optimism is not facile or false. It is compounded with an often deep melancholy, surfacing in what Philip Larkin called "the occasional plangent sentence of the kind that give her books their special quality". Particularly in the later books, the full emotional implications of the marginal social lives lived by her characters are starkly, powerfully, stated:

> "Letty allowed her to ramble on while she looked around the wood, remembering its autumn carpet of beech leaves and wondering if it could be the kind of place to lie down in and prepare for death when life became too much to be endured. Had an old person—a pensioner, of course—ever been found in such a situation? No doubt it would be difficult to lie undiscovered for long, for this wood was a favourite walking place for bustling women with dogs."

With these qualities goes an unsparing vision of the social ways of human beings, particularly men:

> "A group of younger Fellows were crowding round the table, helping themselves to drinks. It was like a mass of young animals, tomcats in their prime. She noticed the young computer expert among them, less inhibited now. Many of the older Fellows had left after the dinner, returning decorously to tall North Oxford houses where wives waited grimly."

This direct unsparing vision is at its strongest in her penultimate and best novel, *Quartet in Autumn*—which, frightening as its portrait of gathering old age is, still ends in characteristic refusal to repine. This was to be followed only by the beautiful *A Few Green Leaves*, written during the year she was dying of cancer. It is sometimes said that Barbara Pym's novels, much concerned as they are with the Church, lack religion. Certainly there is no theology in them, yet all are based on the unspoken assumption that our life here is necessarily incomplete. None concentrates on the everyday with more loving attention than this last, just as none seems to move more clear-sightedly, radiantly, towards death.

These late novels, directly reflecting the 1970s, contain only the last faint echoes of Barbara Pym's distinctive world. When Jonathan Cape reprinted *Jane and Prudence* in 1979, after many years, the modern editor, wishing to evoke the quality of the novel in the blurb, quoted the affected gentleman Fabian Driver saying of his dead wife, "Constance was so fond of quiches." But what Driver in fact had said was, "Constance was so fond of quinces." Much about changing England is summed up in that mistake. To read Barbara Pym is to enter a world where people such as Fabian Driver do rhapsodise about quinces, where guests at dinner rush to cap a quotation before their neighbour can do so, and where elderly ladies worry about whether young curates are getting enough good white meat. Barbara Pym had established this world already in her unpublished fiction of the 1930s ("Widows before spinsters", said Miss Whitby to Beatrice in an undertone, "I suppose that is only right"), and it remained the best-known characteristic of her work, allowing people in the mid-1980s, as her literary editor Hazel Holt has pointed out, to describe something as "very Barbara Pym" and be instantly understood.

WHY, THEN, WAS Barbara Pym rejected for so long? And why has she such appeal now among readers to whom the social and moral world of her novels is already remote?

In one sense she was always marginal. She was never a professional author: she did not earn her living from literature. Just as her characters have about them an unworldly and socially displaced air (we learn their taste in poetry but not their sources of income), so Barbara Pym, until her last years, lived a life remote from the modern publicity machine and the pressures on professional authors. Her friend of later years, the novelist Penelope Lively, remembers her saying wistfully, "I suppose you'll be going down to London now for the literary season." Barbara Pym believed that it was enough to write and write well, but in an age increasingly dominated by marketing she prepared herself for the role of literary victim.

Her first published novel, *Some Tame Gazelle*, had been issued by Jonathan Cape in 1950, when she was 37 (she had begun the novel, in its first draft, in 1934). Until 1961, five

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more novels appeared under Cape's imprint, but their critical impact was small. They attracted largely a Boots' Library readership; as Barbara Pym herself once remarked, no one in those days ever spoke about "the art of Barbara Pym". Not enough interest was aroused to prevent her later oblivion.

The reasons for this are several, and understandable. The novels fall into two principal groups: this first group of the 1950s, which is more purely social comedy, and the three novels published between her rediscovery in 1977 and the year of her death, 1980—*The Sweet Dove Died, Quartet in Autumn*, and *A Few Green Leaves*—which are stronger and more serious books. In the 1950s, the whole of this talent was not yet on view, and the work, at least superficially, seemed to belong to a well-worn genre of English fiction from which excitement was not expected.

In the 1950s, large numbers of durable reputations in English fiction were first made, but the categories into which they tended to fall—Angry Young Men and so on—did not apply to Barbara Pym. A few of the more perceptive noticed that a voice of striking originality had begun to speak. Thus Philip Larkin later wrote of this period:

> "It was time for a breakthrough that would establish her among the dozen or so novelists recognised as original voices and whose books automatically head the review lists. With this in mind, I had written to her in 1961 saying how much I liked her novels and suggesting I should do an article about them to coincide with the publication of her next, hinting that she should let me know when it was ready. She replied amiably, but was clearly in no hurry. . . ."

But when she sent Cape that next novel, *An Unsuitable Attachment*, in 1963, it was rejected in a curt letter.

At this period, after the death of Jonathan Cape in 1960, the firm, whose list had long consisted largely of polite middle-class fiction and *belles-lettres*, had begun a process of determined modernisation, and the rejuvenation of the fiction list was in the hands of a newly-appointed young editor, Tom Maschler. His stewardship is clearly if discreetly described in Michael S. Howard's *Jonathan Cape, Publisher*, (1971), which mentions the new publishing triumphs but not the ditching of now unwanted authors.

BARBARA PYM WAS CONVINCED that she had been rejected because her books were judged to be unfashionable and therefore uncommercial. Cape's version of events, contained in a letter writen after 1977 by Tom Maschler to Philip Larkin, is that the novel was turned down largely on the basis of unfavourable readers' reports, and only marginally for commercial reasons. It certainly seems possible—human decision-making being unpredictable—that, had the reports been favourable, Barbara Pym would not then have been rejected. But the context of the decision—no personal meetings were suggested; no interest was expressed in any future work (two later novels, later to be published by Macmillan, were turned down by Cape); and her early novels not already remaindered went quickly out of print with no prospect of return—makes it clear that an established author was being dropped. Others, including Barbara Pym's friend Robert Liddell, suffered the same fate.

DURING THE NEXT fourteen years, she unsuccessfully submitted her work, including the fine later novels *The Sweet Dove Died* and *Quartet in Autumn*, to 21 publishing houses, some of them approached several times—once or twice, in desperation, under the false name of Tom Crampton. As far as literary reputations went, Barbara Pym hardly seemed to exist. She had rarely previously been named in literary surveys and had not been asked to write reviews. During the period between 1963 and 1977, a very brief mention in G. S. Fraser's *The Modern Writer and His World* (rev. ed. 1964) and an article about her, "How Pleasant to Know Miss Pym", by her friend Robert Smith in *Ariel* in 1971, are almost the only references in print; and the only academic interest was that of an Italian student, Tullia Blando, who before Barbara Pym's revival in 1977 had begun an undergraduate thesis on her work. Her novels were unobtainable, except for some reprinted in Portway library editions. Nor need this position ever have changed: only a fortunate combination of circumstances and a few influential admirers brought Barbara Pym back.

To read through the voluminous correspondence with publishers at this period is a depressing experience. Again and again the bulky parcels, delivered with self-deprecating letters during her lunch-breaks from the International Afri-

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can Institute, came back with what Barbara Pym grew to recognise as almost a standard rejection letter. She recorded that during this period she had almost come to regard the epithet "well-written" as an insult when applied to her work. Although conceding them to be "well-written", the letters say that there is "little demand for this type of novel under present publishing conditions" or "We also thought that there was a faintly dated air about the book which would make it a difficult one under modern conditions." One wonders, of course, given Barbara Pym's present popularity, whether this was a sound judgment even in commercial terms.

Quite often the books were sent back with high praise from the reader, but nevertheless an unshakeable conviction that such work could not sell. James Wright of Macmillan, to which house *The Sweet Dove Died* was sent in 1970, returned it with the following comments:

> "It seems to me beautifully done, with quiet wit and a sensitive awareness of how preposterous people are. I enjoyed it greatly, smiling at its humour and felicity of style and the perfection of its taste. . . . On commercial grounds alone I am afraid we shall reluctantly have to say no. . . . I would like to thank you for allowing us to read your charming book, and I do hope that somebody else will have the courage to publish it. . . ."

THE CULTURAL MOOD of the 1960s was one of spurious radicalism, as opposed to the harder Leftism that became one dominant ideology of the early 1970s: it seemed to demand a combination of democratisation and protest on the one hand with smartness and modernity on the other. This dual character set it off from a period of similar cultural upheaval, the 1920s, when smartness was demanded but democracy not, or the 1970s, when democracy was demanded but not smartness. Whatever else she was, Barbara Pym was out of tune with Carnaby Street.

It is easy to see why. Her novels combine an appeal to the values of traditional and conservative (with a small "c") England with a certain determined drabness. Her characters, anxious to preserve a gentility which seems to lack economic or even social foundation, worry endlessly about what is "suitable" or "unsuitable" in a way that must have seemed offensive in an age that prided itself on being "classless". If the Pym heroine has a roof over her head, an income, and the knowledge that she is a *lady*, she enjoys few other of life's sweets: she is too often to be found in a dreary self-service restaurant eating unappetising food and hoping wistfully that the diner at the next table will find her interesting because of the Coventry Patmore she is reading. What could have seemed less "swinging"?

There is a great humility about this woman: she does not expect to be found interesting, despite the Coventry Patmore; she accepts it cheerfully when she is not; she is conscious of the inevitable limitations her sort of life involves. She believes, in her muddled way (although the author may not), that men, hopelessly incapable and unresponsive as they are, ought to have the attention denied herself. She is innocent about sex. She could not be further from the assertive women celebrated in "women's novels" of the 1960s, masterfully coping with contraceptives and abortions. She is an offence to the ethics of an expansive, hopeful, and selfish period.

One can see how even small features of Barbara Pym's work would have seemed calculated to annoy. Even her characters' habit of quoting fragments of English poetry and hymns (nothing very modern), a heritage from her lifelong devotion to "the greater English poets", must have seemed a dated appeal to the culture of the commonplace book. As Philip Larkin remarked in another context, ". . . any hint of 'musing among silent friends' marked you out as an enemy of the people."

This feature becomes much less marked in Barbara Pym's later work: she knew that novels of the 1970s would not admit this appeal to a lost world. She was responsive to social change, and mirrored it deliberately in her work. *The Sweet Dove Died*, for instance, has a mild but unmistakable tang of the mid-1960s when it was written, giving it an unusual *frisson*. Critics of the 1980s find feminism implicit in her women's ostensible attitude. But in the 1960s publishers' readers—who were the only people then exposed to her works—failed to appreciate the implications that are so obvious now. How easy it must have been to think simply: we've had enough of this dim, genteel rubbish.

Barbara Pym used her experience of rejection, which might have tempted some into disappointed silence, to refine her art. Despite the merits of her early books, such as *Excellent Women*, they discreetly sidestep the implications of her characters' emotions. In the later books, although the technique is the same, and the gentle humour still ever-present, reality breaks through.

THE SYMPOSIUM IN *The Times Literary Supplement* (21 January 1977) in which writers of all kinds were asked to name the most overrated and underrated novelists of the previous 75 years, is now justly famous. Barbara Pym was the only underrated novelist to be named twice—by Philip Larkin and Lord David Cecil. The symposium is credited, in the current cultural shorthand, with responsibility for the sudden revival. In fact, literary friends had already been tunnelling on her behalf, and senior editors at Macmillan (where *Quartet in Autumn* was under consideration) were aware of her merits and plight. On 14 February 1977, Macmillan told her they would publish the novel. She called it the best Valentine's card she'd ever had.

The book was published in mid-September. With an odd reversal of fortune, Barbara Pym, hitherto bypassed by modern publicity, now began to benefit from hype. Her difficulties, real as they were, made a good story: publication was marked by major features in *The Times* and *The Guardian*, by a crop of good reviews, and, shortly afterwards, by a place on the Booker Prize short-list. The earlier novels were reprinted by Cape, the new ones were published by Macmillan, and a series of Granada and Penguin paperbacks began to appear. By the time of Barbara Pym's death on 11 January 1980, her revival was fully under way.

In a review of *A Very Private Eye*, the collection of Barbara

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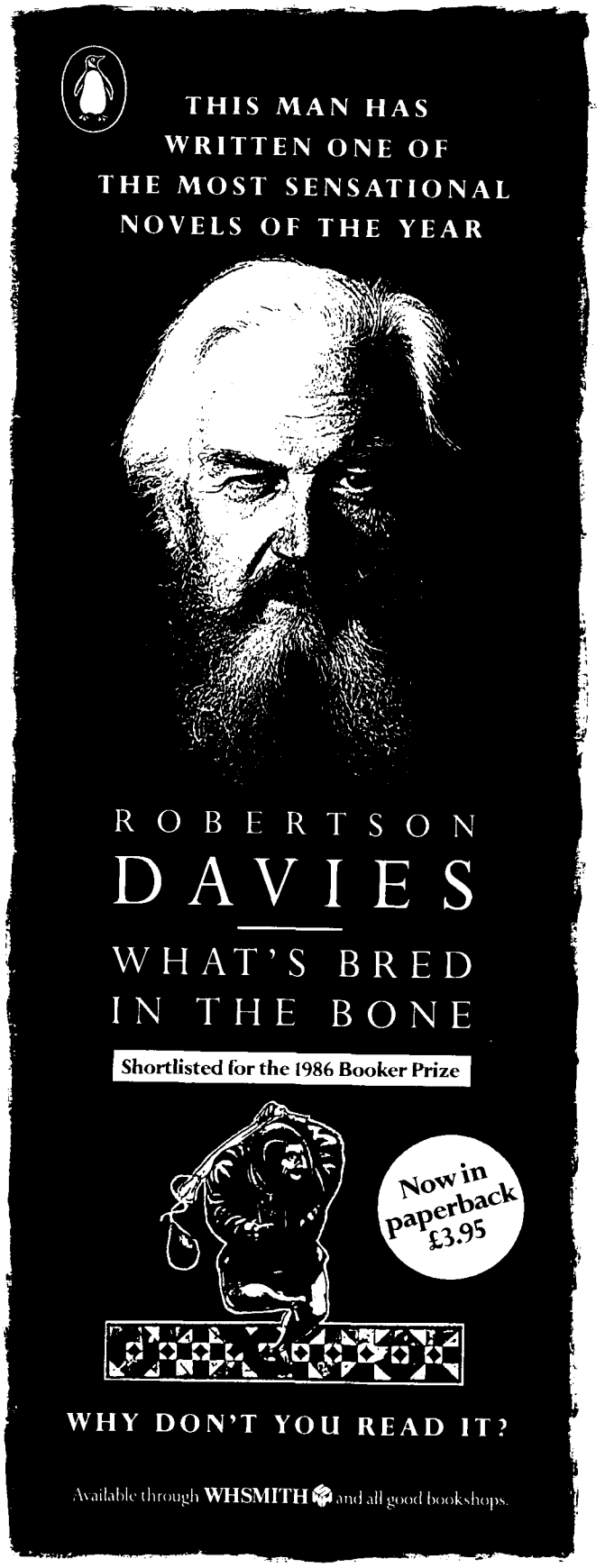
Pym's letters and journals published in 1984, A. N. Wilson referred to D. H. Lawrence's declaration that he wanted to "wash off England, the oldness and the grubbiness and despair". Wilson went on to comment, ". . . after fifteen years in dry dock, the oldness and the grubbiness and the despair re-emerged in 1977, with the publication of *Quartet in Autumn*." Barbara Pym's period of maximum appeal was not the England of the 1950s and earlier which she had mainly recorded, but the curious England of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the social world of her novels had become remote. In this period, she reached an audience not only of Boots' Library readers and their modern equivalents, but of the young, of Americans, of people who did not instinctively understand her world.

What character in the age allowed this reversal? Perhaps it was a faintly defiant conservatism. Britain had been fundamentally altered during the 1960s, and everyone knew this could not be reversed: few people, at heart, wished to reverse it. The country wanted to maintain its gains and yet reassert the traditionalism largely abandoned in the previous period: Margaret Thatcher and the Mohican haircut of the Punks were both entirely typical expressions of the age.

THE QUESTION REMAINS whether the renewed vogue for Barbara Pym, particularly for her early novels of the 1950s, is not simply fashionable nostalgia—the literary equivalent of endless Edwardian or Agatha Christie serials on television. Certainly, her novels provide predictable pleasure. Her readers expect a certain type of entertainment, and they are not disappointed. However, considering the formidable odds against which she had to fight her way back to publication, it seems unlikely that mere fashion is responsible for her revival. She has achieved renewed popularity because editors and a large body of readers have become convinced that her work had been unjustly, scandalously, neglected.

But, while at one level simply responding to the merits of her work, perhaps Barbara Pym's readers are also making a statement about themselves. We cannot recapture, they are saying, the mores and values of that world, the period in which even a London suburb seemed to be bound by the restricted if cosy habits of an Anglican church community: but nevertheless we value the quiet, traditional virtues. One of the characteristics of Barbara Pym's characters, and by implication of the whole ethos of her novels, is *humility*, a virtue once taught by the Church around which her work centres, but the rarest of the major virtues both in modern life and fiction. It is still a suspect virtue: people may wish to be thought *caring*, but it is a veiled insult to call them *humble*. An age of recession, however, is prepared to respond to this quality, at least when presented rather than demanded. The self-deprecating ethos of Barbara Pym's work is combined, as it happens, with a quiet strength and sharpness which prevent it seeming anodyne.

Could Barbara Pym have become a victim of her own now posthumous success? Everyone who knew her says that she was not a good interviewee, and she might well have found increased publicity hard to cope with. Would she have wanted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early and abandoned novels to be exhumed? The publication of the delightful *Crampton Hodnet*, issued in 1985, was well-deserved, but *An Academic Question*, published last year, although interesting, is a more equivocal survival.

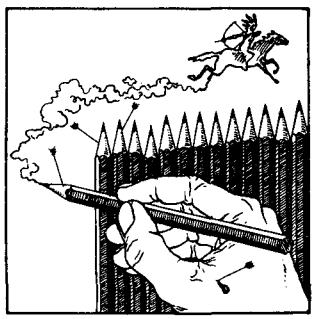
It is difficult to know how Barbara Pym would have responded to the quest by journalists and researchers for biographical material. Until recently, in an age when authors' lives regularly excite more interest than their works, she had enjoyed a remarkable anonymity, which helped detached contemplation of her art. The first volume of biographical material, *A Very Private Eye* (1984), a selection of letters, diaries and notebooks deposited in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, began to change all that. The commonplace nature of much of this biographical material, the revelation of how much she really had been the gawky English spinster thwarted in love, and the paucity of explanatory editing, may have had a damaging effect. However, Anita Brookner, reviewing the book, wrote:

> "There is scarcely a quotable sentence in this beautiful autobiography, yet one lays it down with the feeling that it contains the living essence of Barbara Pym while her novels reproduce only the Barbara Pym that circumstances forced her to be."

Barbara Pym's reputation stands at a certain distance from its earlier tribulations. "Miniatures, perhaps, but they will not diminish", was Philip Larkin's considered verdict on the six earlier novels. It could perhaps stand as an epitaph on her whole, enduring *oeuvre*.

# Message from the Back

## *The War Biographies of Spike Milligan—By* Miles Kington



One of my tasks when I was working at *Punch* was to read my share of articles sent in by readers who were convinced that they could write as well as those featured every week. (It is true that the standard of stuff printed was not always very high, but the standard of stuff sent in was almost always even lower.) Out of the pieces shovelled on to my desk there were always two or three every month which carried an accompanying letter which went something like this:

> "Dear Sir,
>
> The enclosed article is an account of a perfectly true incident which happened to me during the War, and with which I have regaled my friends on many occasions in the past. They have now persuaded me to set it down on paper, so that . . ." etc., etc.

These anecdotes were always dreadful. I could see that at the time they might have been funny, or that an expert raconteur might just have made them funny; but an attempt to write them down 30 years later made them seem about as amusing as a Norman Wisdom film dubbed into German. (I read somewhere recently that Norman Wisdom films are very popular in East Germany; can this dreadful idea possibly be true?) I always felt rather sad about this. After all, if the funniest thing that happened to you in World War Two falls so very flat now, what can the rest of your war have been like? Or God help us, what would a whole book about the War written by one of these gentlemen have read like?

Instead of writing one anecdote about the War and failing, Spike Milligan has written six whole books about the War and succeeded.[1] Six volumes of memoirs about one war is, I would bet, more than any other soldier in the history of the world has written, even if the last one is a bit of a cheat—after all, *Goodbye Soldier* starts in June 1946, when for most people, except a few Japanese soldiers hiding deep in the woods, the War was already well and truly over. Still, if anyone in a quiz ever asks you which book about World War Two starts in June 1946, you know now.

The reason for Milligan's success has got nothing to do with the fact that funny things happened to him. He had no more than his normal share. In fact, considering that Volume 5 starts with his taking up space in a hospital for the badly shell-shocked, you might say that he sometimes had less than his fair share of gaiety. What happens to him in this volume is, on the face of it, unpromising: he checks out of the hospital; he gets involved in one or two officers' messes as an orderly; he paints a mural for one of them; he gets into a band and does some shows. That's about it. His experiences form a very tiny part of the overall picture of the War in Italy in 1944 and 1945, but I am still reasonably sure that this is the funniest book ever to come out of a war apart from *Catch 22*, but then I think everything is apart from *Catch 22*.

Nor is it just that Milligan is a funny man who has the gift of making humdrum things seem funny. He does indeed have the knack of making very funny jokes, but he shares this with a knack for making very bad jokes. He also breaks all the rules of good writing, in that he does not establish a style or

[1] *Where Have All the Bullets Gone?* and *Goodbye Soldier. War Biography, Volumes 5 and 6.* By Spike Milligan. Michael Joseph with Jack Hobbs, £9.95 each. *Where Have All the Bullets Gone?*, Penguin, £2.50 (a boxed set comprising the first five volumes is available at £11.40).

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tone and then keep to it, but prefers to dash madly sidewards at all opportunities—in fact, half the time he is not writing at all, but talking and then writing down what he has just said. I have not read a great many war memoirs recently, but I am sure that none of the others says, "No, seriously, folks", or suddenly inflicts an old faded drawing on the reader, like someone getting out the family photos.

I think the clue to Milligan's success lies in his childishness, which in turn explains his humour. He is not a very grown-up sort of person. He sees things in bright colours, like a child, in terms of very good and very bad, in terms of crying and laughter. Cruelty to animals makes him cry, but seeing things from a sudden, fresh angle makes him laugh. Twenty years ago he spent a long time restoring a carved oak-stump in Kensington Gardens, and I am sure it was no coincidence that the tree was dedicated to Peter Pan, or at least was very near the statue of Peter Pan, the boy who refused to grow up.

Now, refusing to grow up is universally condemned, but it does have certain advantages. It makes you live longer. It stops you respecting accepted stupidities (Spike is a well-known enemy of canned music, being known even to rip out wires in lifts, or to phone large companies and then switch them on to *his* background music, which is all very childish and I wish I had done it). It keeps your taste-buds going. And it enables you to look at what people say, and what they do, in a totally refreshing way; I can remember hearing the following exchange in a *Goon Show* 30 years ago:

> "It looks like a messenger from the Front."
> "It looks like a messenger from the back too."

and realising that here was a man who was not afraid to pull language to bits and see what it looked like when you put it back together again—back to front, that is.

In Volume 5 Spike describes the first Army variety show he was involved with, and says: "I didn't know it, but I was taking my first steps towards writing *The Goon Show*. For this I have to thank Hitler, without whose war it would never have happened." There then follows this little episode set in a black-edged panel.

> "SOMEWHERE IN THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO 1984 NINETY-YEAR-OLD HITLER IS SHOVELLING SHIT AND SALT.
>
> HITLER: Hear zat? You must let me be free. I am zer inventor of zer Coon Show. Ven zer Queen hears zis she will giff me zer OBE and ein free Corgi."

That's childish. It's also brilliant. The book is spattered with memos from Hitler to his staff, some memorably funny, some terrible. It's also dotted with old cuttings, faded photos, wartime programmes, and even old postcards, which give the book extraordinary immediacy. You get the feeling that when Milligan was writing the book, he really was back in Italy and remembering everything that happened, which is quite ridiculous. What he is doing is remembering what it felt like, and then inventing details to make his memory feel authentic. One knows that he invents the details, because the incident which closes Volume 5 is exactly the same incident that opens Volume 6, and he tells it in two quite different ways, with quite different details.

But there is something else that makes Volume 5 stand out from the others. When he was writing Volumes 1-4, Milligan began receiving letters and visits from many of the people he had known in the War and was now writing about. They reminded him of things he had forgotten, told stories different ways, produced diaries, letters, and photos of their own. And these are now incorporated, quite literally, into the text of Volume 5. Pages 49-51 are taken up with a close-packed letter from Sergeant Len Prosser, who played double bass in the band with Spike, providing his own reminiscences at no extra cost. Other pages are taken up by Spike's own wartime diary or letters, proving that in those days, even when trying to be funny, he wrote in a very different style. He had not yet been influenced by Spike Milligan, that is.

What this means is that whereas most memoirs consist of one man remembering, this book consists of:

1. One man remembering what happened.
2. One man making the rest up.
3. Other people remembering what happened.
4. One man reprinting what he thought at the time, and wrote down then.
5. Other people remembering what Spike thought at the time.

IF THIS WERE an avant-garde book, that would be called a *very* experimental approach. At one point Spike reveals that the title of the book, *Where Have All The Bullets Gone?*, was a question he asked in the shell-shock hospital, but doesn't remember saying. It was only many years later, when he met Jock Rodgers, a Scots Guard who was also in the hospital, and Rodgers quoted the question to him, that Spike realised he had the title ready-made. Yes, technically this is a highly adventurous book, you can hear them saying on *Critics' Forum*; Milligan's daring experiments with time, don't you think, are quite breathtaking, the mixed-media approach with *pictures* and *letters* and *diaries*, the way he introduces Hitler almost as another character, and the way he claims the title was reported to him by one Jock Rodgers, one almost wonders if he actually invented Jock Rodgers, what do you think, Richard. . . ?

But as the book is by Spike Milligan it is dismissed as being another joky, rag-bag scrap-book of memoirs, and is thus saved from *Critics' Forum* for ever. It *is* a joky rag-bag of a book, but I think it works a dream. In his fifth volume Milligan keeps a lot of balls going in the air—his perpetually baffled sex life, his darker depressions, his joy at music, his love of Italy, the progress of the War, his fascination with comedy—and if he knew what a difficult conjuring trick it was, he would probably have muffed it. The reason the sixth volume is thinner and straighter, though sunnier, is that it narrates his travels round Europe with an Army entertainment group and relives a magic year-long affair with one of the Italian dancers on tour; all charming stuff but a much less crowded canvas, and, sexually, a bit naïve for a 28-year-old.

Whereas in Volume 5 we are, among other things, treated to the eruption of Vesuvius, given an audience with Gigli, taken on a trip round a deserted Capri, and given a close-up glimpse of Gracie Fields, whom Milligan quite rightly found ghastly. He claims, and who am I to believe him, that the first

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time he saw our Gracie in concert coincided with the eruption of Vesuvius, and that the audience fled in terror while Gracie sang on. It left Spike with the image of a whole audience running away just because she had opened her mouth.

When Milligan got back to his camp, right underneath Vesuvius, the eruption was in full swing and Milligan found armed guards roaming with loaded rifles.

> " 'Captain Peters told us to shoot on sight', they said.
> 'Shoot what on sight?' I said.
> 'Oh, he didn't go into details', they said."

Milligan, probably wisely, took off in a jeep and, clutching two bottles of wine, spent the next few hours roaming the streets of ancient Pompeii, all by himself, getting stoned out of his mind as Vesuvius did much the same. What a way to see an eruption.

Captain Peters, by the way, was the meanest man Milligan ever met, and Spike often had to pay bills as the Captain patted his pockets. But he got his own back. . . .

> "Revenge is sweet, but not fattening. After the War I was about to open an account at Lloyds of Lewisham and I was to meet the manager. My God, it was Captain Peters. 'Milligan', he said joyfully.
>
> Hurriedly I started patting my pockets. 'Damn', I said, 'I've come out without any money. . . .' To my lasting joy I still have an unpaid overdraft there—ten shillings since 1949."

But the temptation to quote from these two books is coming upon me and I must resist. I just want to urge you to invest in Milligan, and to give thanks that somebody resisted the temptation to call any of these volumes *The Good Soldier Spike*. I have to admit that I have several times tried to start *The Good Soldier Schweik* and always found it appallingly tedious, but Spike Milligan fills the gap beautifully with his mad, inventive, anarchic, silly, childish, poetic, touching, funny, wonderful books.

TWO HISTORICAL NOTES, finally. Humphrey Lyttelton is often portrayed as the loony soldier landing at Salerno with a trumpet in his knapsack, dreaming of New Orleans jazz. Spike did more or less the same thing, but was dreaming of Bunny Berigan and playing some of Woody Herman's harder stuff with his band, which I'm afraid makes him much more progressive than old Humph.

And, if you want it, Spike's first meeting with Harry Secombe is on page 183 of the fifth volume, where he is described as a myopic blubber of fat from Wales:

> "General Montgomery saw him and nearly surrendered. He spoke like a speeded-up record, nobody understood him, he didn't even understand himself; forty years later he was knighted for not being understood."

Curiously, Milligan is never offensive about Harry Secombe, but never particularly kind either. Is there some hidden hostility there? Does Spike perhaps feel that it's unfair for Harry to get a knighthood, when Milligan remains unhonoured? If he doesn't, I do.


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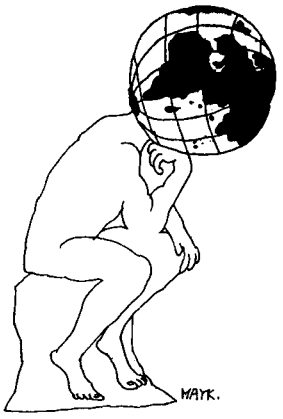
# Fictions of Freedom

## *Recent Commonwealth Writing—By* MICHAEL THORPE




"WHAT HAS MADE IT impossible for us to live in time like fish in water, like birds in air, like children? It is the fault of Empire!" So the magistrate comes to recognise in J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, a recognition which in Coetzee's allegory remains relevant to South Africa, whose subject blacks still thirst for "liberation" as the talismanic key to a better future. Elsewhere, most of the colonised peoples in the British Empire attained "freedom" almost a generation ago. Not for these new peoples, Chinua Achebe affirmed, the literature of the alienated individual, but a truly African literature binding in one community the individual, the writer, and society. This was what freedom was for, not the existentialist balancing act over the void. There was, however, much repair work to be done. Literature would help restore pride in their being to a subject people whose history and culture had been denigrated, repairing the broken links with pre-colonial history and the world of the ancestors.

Thus one saw, at the French African extreme, a *négritude* movement tending towards inverse racism, while the more moderate "English" reaction may be well represented by Achebe's ambition:

> "I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them."[1]

Within six years of Nigeria's Independence, Achebe's *A Man of the People* bitterly satirised wholesale political corruption; soon afterwards he took the losing side in the Nigerian Civil War. Since then he has published no new novel. His compatriot, Wole Soyinka, imprisoned during that war by the Federal side, had exposed as early as his play *Dance of the Forests* (staged, ironically, for the Independence celebrations in Lagos) the contradictions inherent in the desire to extol Africa's ancient "glories"—of Empire. African Empire has only revived once in name (Bokassa's), but everywhere one-party states, leadership cults, and at the worst gross barbarity such as Idi Amin's, have instead revived spectres of Darkest Africa.

The scribes of Africa Revived are on the retreat. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, after a year's imprisonment in Kenya—essentially for breaking away from the colonial language and subversively addressing his audience in their own—is now in English exile. Exile, self-chosen or compelled, is the common lot, sometimes dubiously sweetened by a sinecure in a Black Studies programme in an American university. Nor is it only Africa who alienates her questioning sons: if more by choice than compulsion, and as much for reasons of publishing economics as political ones, many Indian, Pakistani and West Indian writers live and work in the vilified West, free only there to write what they will. Of the ten whose latest books I discuss here, six have spent their writing lives in England or Canada; two, of Maori descent, write as, in effect, colonised citizens of New Zealand. All, except R. K. Narayan, contribute to expressing a crisis of the values of community. While this can give a depressing unity of theme to the new English literatures, there is a healthy strain of truth-telling and a persistent desire for regeneration.

OUT OF THE TURMOIL and near fragmentation of independent India, R. K. Narayan's fiction has abstracted an impression of changeless stability. His aims are modest: to convey "unambiguously the thoughts and actions of a set of personalities, who flourish in a small town located in a corner of South India" (interview in *The Independent*, 24 October 1986). In such works alien, "Western" influences may intrude, but comedy and continuity (or inertia) repel them. His latest novel, *Talkative Man*,[2] smacks of exhaustion, is virtual self-parody.

T. M., an obscure journalist in Narayan's Malgudi, tells of his great scoop, an encounter with Dr Rann or "Timbuctoo Man", a self-made exotic who is actually "a pure Indian from a southernmost village". Rann masquerades in three-piece suits, speaks of a mysterious "mission" for the United Nations, and intimidates the credulous provincials as initially knowing outsiders often do in Narayan's novels. T. M. becomes Rann's uneasy host and shield against a formidable, pursuing wife, setting Rann free to pursue, not his research, but a girl student with whom he plans to elope. This, apparently, has been his true mission in life, though the locals are so impressed by his academic pretensions as to invite him to address the Lotus Club "on a brand new subject, 'Futurology'". He lectures on the inevitable overwhelming of the planet about 3000 AD by a monstrous weed, which appalling prophecy so agitates anxious mothers as to cause a riot. T. M. has meanwhile foiled Dr Rann's abduction plot and delivers him instead into his wife's massive conjugal embrace. However, the novel's dying fall records his escape to continue his con man's career, Narayan taking the strange step of explaining away the story's truncation: apparently the anti-

[1] Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (1975), p. 45.
[2] *Talkative Man*. By R. K. NARAYAN. Heinemann, £7.95.



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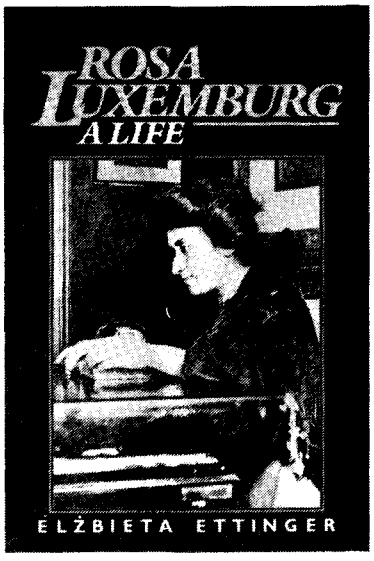
hero was as mysterious to Narayan as to T. M.—the philanderer and the obsessed "futurologist" (a tentative satire on expert modern purveyors of doom) hardly cohering in one. The art has grown complacent in its comic and engaging portrayal of a naive provincialism which may be fluttered, but remains essentially immune to outside influences; where the modern world impinges, it is repelled as absurd.

NARAYAN'S CONSERVATISM is not, in the Indian context, unusual. Indian writers have not felt compelled, like Achebe, to vindicate a history and civilisation which long pre-date the episode of the Raj. A conviction of continuity, an essential unchangingness, remains accessible to Indians, though critical voices increase—and, indeed, it is hard to think of an Indian novel that so bleakly exposes the wife's misery in a traditional Hindu marriage as Narayan's little known early work, *The Dark Room* (1938). By contrast his comedy touching on the contraception campaign, *A Painter of Signs* (1976), shuns the harsher aspects central to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, an unsparing satire on the Nehru dynasty. "India and the Nehrus", in the late Shiva Naipaul's sadly slim posthumous essays,[3] trenchantly analyses how that notorious Indian spirituality which is held to sustain continuity has become translated, in political terms, into "the shabbiest idolatry of family".

AFRICA, CONVULSED SINCE the heady, post-Freedom years by revolutions and coups, keeps throwing up troubled writers who must confront, encompass, or obliquely reflect chaos. Already in youth they may, like the Nigerian Ben Okri, have chosen exile. Unlike Achebe, who sought—and still seeks—through "beneficent fictions" to heal his people's wounded psyche, Okri's fiction painfully probes their self-inflicted wounds.[4] In a bleak Civil War story, "Laughter Beneath the Bridge", a girl of the wrong tribe dances her defiance of the trigger-nervous soldiers in an Egungun mask which traditionally (as in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*) it is sacrilege to violate: "You'll die if you do." The soldiers unmask her, but it is she who is driven off to an anonymous death. The title story, "Incidents at the Shrine", allegorises the limits of ancestral wisdom: if home is, traditionally, "where you receive power", it lies in a recognition of inevitable suffering. When the scene shifts to London, Okri's other, less concretely evoked locale, there is a complementary desolation: a feverish dream of wandering and homelessness, cancelling the narrator's desired "reverie about some sort of room in the sky where lies and illusions and self-deceptions are made naked; and where humanity can recover its very basic sense of terror and compassion".

[3] *An Unfinished Journey*. By SHIVA NAIPAUL. Hamish Hamilton, £9.95.

[4] *Incidents at the Shrine*. By BEN OKRI. Heinemann, £9.95.

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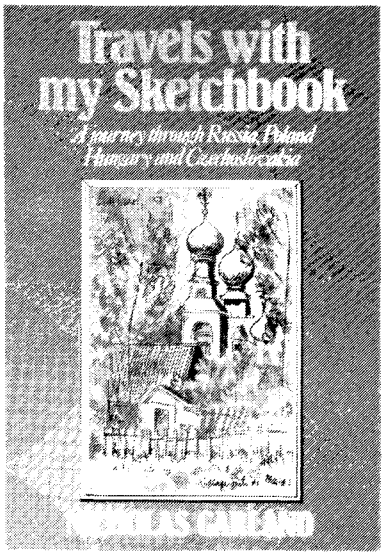


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By contrast—a singular contrast in today's African writing—B. Kojo Laing's Ghana, in the mid-1970s, is an "expectant space", thronged even after the death of Nkrumah's African Socialism, spilling from beneath the "soldier's cap" of military rule. *Search, Sweet Country*[5] is alive with visionaries and searchers—for the ideal state, the utopian village—and with redemptive unions: "Add Adwoa to Loww! and the rain will fall." The good witch Adwoa herself, in a way some Africans still believe in, can make soul-flights by night and comfort the unhappy in their dreams. Such flights smother the horrors with ebullient fancy: the secret service, the military, are carnival figures, not Okri's prosaic destroyers:

> "All the ordinary people were the real people: they lived beyond the slogans, they outlasted the politicians, even those that wanted to label and measure their very blood . . . there was the ruled blood, and there was the unruled blood that did the ruling. By the Chorkor beach Acheampong's Revolution lay exhausted in the sands, being pushed up and down by the damnation of the tides."

Acheampong was overthrown in 1979; Ghana's new saviour is Jerry Rawlings: is Laing's faith in the "real people" hope or fatalism? Though supernatural ascension, farcical comedy, and masterful language may be the author's means of clinging to sanity through the dark years, they also voice literature's life-affirming force with an imaginative freedom seen rarely in African writing since the early Soyinka and Tutuola.

V. S. Naipaul wrote in his controversial *The Middle Passage* (1962) of "the squalor of the politics that came to Trinidad in 1946", and his early novels satirised political corruption with a comic verve that would soon evaporate, darkening into the grotesque mayhem of *Guerillas*. Austin Clarke left his native Barbados in 1955 and has since lived mostly in Canada, apart from an abortive year in 1975-76 as General Manager of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, since when he has vowed never to return without some radical change of government.

In a recent novel, *Proud Empires*,[6] he does return, in a manner akin to the early Naipaul's, to the Barbados of the 1950s. The novel's pattern and small-island setting also recall George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*, though with a cooler hindsight. The humour, like Naipaul's, turns often upon colonial confusions of values and ideas: "responsible guvvament" translates as "self-betterment first", politicians exploit the catch-cry of the "small man" but are admired for living big. The subtle articulations of colour—Boy, the hero, is distinguished by belonging to "a family of complexion and colour", the Prime Minister is, inevitably, "high-brown"—undermine the sloganeering for blackness. John Moore-Adams, who dresses like a "black American tourist" and is a wealthy landowner returned from "Amurca", like George Lamming's Trumper berates these contemptible "niggers" for looking still toward England: "Oxford and Cambridge have train the goddamn niggers who're running 'bout here, keeping us in a new kind o' slavery." Finally Boy, after coming top in the Island examinations, breaks the cycle by going to Toronto's "jungle" of "the snow and the cold and the night". His displacement and alienation there are cursorily sketched; when he returns and quickly forsakes his ambitions as a lawyer, yielding to pressure to take up a political career, Clarke withholds authorial irony, but there is a suggestion of cynical, resigned acquiescence. Perhaps a bitter sequel is being written.

In Caryl Phillips's typically low-key second novel, *A State of Independence*,[7] the narrative opens with his hero Bertram's return to his small-island home, twenty years after he had left to take up his Island's scholarship to study law in England. Independence is imminent, a new life for the individual seems possible, but Bertram sees with what are now "English" eyes "overwhelming" degradation and quickly, his vague expectations crumbling, falls into introspection and—goaded by whispered "dust-encrusted words" muttering of his failure overseas—into bitter alienation. Rejected by a mother he has neglected, despised by Jackson Clayton, a schoolfriend he had beaten for the scholarship turned "big man", he finds brief oblivion only in the ageing body of Patsy, the sweetheart of his youth.

Bertram's English years are barely sketched, but as in Austin Clarke's book that background is irrelevant to the new realities of independence for the "dwarfish countries" of the Caribbean: "we living Stateside now", Jackson enlightens him. And Patsy sees the deeper implications of this: "It's all here in the present, for we too small a country to have a past." No wishful African roots redeem the present here (in *Proud Empires*, Boy shrinks from "this uncomfortable association" with a savage past); there is only Bertram's disturbing recollection of "the games they used to play as children. Their favourite was African Crocodiles, which involved stripping some fool naked, usually him, and then dangling them over the end of the pier." Stripped again, of all larger pretensions, Bertram accepts his return to mediocrity and resolves to devote himself to his mother's welfare.

Both Clarke's and Phillips's novels settle for unheroic realities: their heroes are virtually ciphers to whom things happen; little, good or ill, is self-determined. In a colonial or post-colonial state the "people" remain colonised; there is no brave new nation. Austin Clarke's Boysie, in his earlier *Storm of Fortune*, had seen that "All white people is bitches, if you ask me. And we, as black people, ain't much different, neither" (a truth, alas, beyond the grasp of romantic white liberals). The new Boysies, seizing their chance, are the black heirs of the old white plantation-owners. The fiction confronts one with a diminished image of man.

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[5] *Search, Sweet Country*. By B. Kojo Laing. Heinemann, £10.95.

[6] *Proud Empires*. By Austin Clarke. Gollancz, £9.95.

[7] *A State of Independence*. By Caryl Phillips. Faber & Faber, £8.95. The close model for Phillips's fictional island is St Kitts, though he grew up in England where his parents brought him in the year of his birth.

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This may be felt as tragic or, oppressed by diminution, as pathetic. Pathos, stemming from a traumatised helplessness, runs through the first collection of stories, *Digging Up the Mountains*,[8] of Neil Bissoondath, a young nephew (and fictional heir) of V. S. Naipaul, who emigrated from Trinidad to Canada in 1973. As with Naipaul, his vision ranges beyond Trinidad: it focuses upon convulsed "half-formed societies" and includes, in the stories set in Canada, emigrant figures practising inverse racism. A Naipaulesque diagnostic note is strong: the hurt of history underlies the suffering and self-contempt of those who remain in the small island—"our history doesn't lead anywhere. It's just a big black hole"—and continues to poison the minds and actions of those who leave. A darkly humorous Naipaulesque encounter with a "revolutionary" black student at a Canadian university, like the student's wife's photograph, "seemed to capture nothing but distress".

The insecurity of the Indian businessman in the title story and of another such figure in a story entitled "Insecurity" is the keynote of consciousness. The old colonial hegemony has been supplanted by régimes which utter the new cant of "the people" and, sustained by masked and intoxicated killers, run their brutal course, breaking brittle lives, abusing vulnerable flesh—"a carnival of radicals and madmen".

In a compressed, even constricted, narrative of multiple correspondences and parallels, Wilson Harris's *Carnival*[9] seeks yet again to articulate through an infernal and purgatorial "biography of the spirit" the way to redeem the "savage heart" of a "tormented colonial age". Carnival time is all times, not the linear time in which Clarke's, Phillips's and Bissoondath's characters agitate. Carnival spatial action is a masked mode whose figures compose a mysterious unity, if we will seek it, as the narrator does in piecing together the significance of the life of his subject, Everyman Masters (one of those "*master* spirits who descend"), who is in turn Virgilian guide "backward in time".

Set in New Forest, Harris's name for his native country of Guyana, and in the Holland Park area of London where he has lived for over twenty years, the narrative of *Carnival* follows a characteristic quest movement, through a phantasmagoria of correspondences, shifting, overlapping, dissolving the conventional planes of being, time, place and perception, "a modern allegory" which will seem to uninitiated readers to demand a preparatory course in hermeneutics. Recently, the meaning of Harris's fiction has become self-consciously pointed, a metaphysical shorthand on the surface of a narrative whose point cannot readily be grasped by any but those thoroughly versed in his previous work and able at once to recognise the recurrent complex metaphors: El Dorado, river, sun, boulders, waterfalls, exploratory boat and crew. . . . Such readers may in glimpses, reading and rereading as one does a sacred book, be occasionally moved to see what Harris expressed more compellingly in his inspired Guyana Quartet of the 1960s (happily reprinted in one volume in 1985) and since in his critical prose:

> "In the context of carnival or masked comedy and upheaval which disperses reflections of form . . . we may perceive . . . the fascinations of *shared ego or desire and conquest* entrenched within cultures. This brings home the reality of evil, in which cultures are immersed in codes to invert or overturn each other rather than become involved in complex mutuality and the difficult creation of community."[10]

If fiction is to contribute to this "difficult creation", how much difficulty of form can it venture without obscuring its relevatory purpose or, at best, risking limitation to a cultic readership of initiates? In the more realistic fictions of two New Zealand novelists who are also (like Harris) of mixed blood, the writers' self-division and their society's are passionately and violently staged—which seems the apt word, for mythical inflation and a straining after epic dimensions are rife in Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*[11] and Witi Ihimaera's *The Matriarch*.[12] Both are, more plainly than Harris's novel, journeys of discovery by writers intent on giving primacy, not to their *Pakeha* (white) blood, but to the ancestral integrity of their Maori ("people of the land") descent.

When it was reviewed in its Booker Prize year, *The Bone People* impressed because of the passionate intensity of its unflinching portrayal of the painfully evolving love and self-torment of three people: an autistic child, sensitive and compassionate by nature but traumatised by the mysterious shipwreck from which he was saved, an orphan; Joe Gillayley, his loving yet violent, punishing foster-father; and Kerewin Holmes, a wealthy painter who, believing her skill is burnt out, has withdrawn into a solitary life of exquisite sensation in her romantic tower.

The child, Simon, is apparently Irish, and white; Joe and Kerewin are part Pakeha, part Maori, but both, living outside *Maoritanga* (Maoriness), lament its loss "in the way [they] live". Simon, the difficult, anguished boy, draws them into a tense trinity, but when Joe beats him almost to death and is jailed, it seems nothing can reunite them. It is then that the *deus ex machina* of Maori spirituality, which their lives had lacked, claims the adults' lost souls. Kerewin, with a tumour that is also a symbolic affliction, having almost demolished her tower of illusions, goes into the wilderness to die alone, but is granted a dream vision of "strangely clad people, with golden eyes, brown skin" who welcome her to the *marae* (the assembly-place in front of a Maori meeting-house). Joe, released from prison, is led by telepathic force to encounter an old Maori who, near to death, wishes to pass on to "a broken man", as was ordained, the custodianship of the *mauri*—the vital principle of the people, "the heart of this land".

Though an earthquake buries the sacred place, Joe salvages and carries off a potent stone and this, when he is reunited

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[8] *Digging Up the Mountains*. By Neil Bissoondath. André Deutsch, £8.95.

[9] *Carnival*. By Wilson Harris. Faber & Faber, £10.95.

[10] Wilson Harris, *The Womb of Space* (Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 13.

[11] *The Bone People*. By Keri Hulme. Hodder & Stoughton, £8.95; Picador, £3.95.

[12] *The Matriarch*. By Witi Ihimaera. Heinemann, £10.95.

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with Kerewin and Simon to form a new loving trinity, sinks into the earth where she, meanwhile, has rebuilt a ruined Maori hall. We leave them at the heart of a reconstituted community—a wish-fulfilment or fairytale ending in renewal that floats free of the harsh realities both inside and outside the novel.

Essence, though, precedes existence. *The Bone People* ends in regenerative vision; Witi Ihimaera's *The Matriarch* is an encyclopaedic, often pedestrian novel through which the reader, with its narrator and initiate, is inducted into the myths, mysteries and history of the Maoris. The narrator, Tama Mahana, has evidently succeeded in the Pakeha world, earning fame as scholar and lawyer, but this is peripheral; his preoccupation is with the spiritual tutelage imposed upon him since childhood, even beyond her death, by his grandmother Artemis, the matriarch who had "made him as a likeness unto me". Conscious that his Maoriness is losing its force "in a European world", Tama embarks on a quest for his "Maori ancestry", remembering the matriarch's efforts to shape and instruct him, reconstructing in the process Maori myth—the history of the Pakeha-Maori relationship—in a compendious narrative which virtually creates Maoriness, interspersed with Tama's individual struggle to claim and accept his inheritance as the matriarch's heir, chief of the Mahana clan.

It is a complex inheritance, traced from the rebel Te Kooti—resistance leader or "savage"?—and the eloquent Maori parliamentarian, Wi Pere Halbert, both major 19th-century figures whose doings Ihimaera records in lengthy passages drawn from acknowledged historical sources. The deeper inheritance, implanted by frequent retellings of Maori myth, takes one "backward in time to the first dancing when the gods communed with man". Frequently, as in the telling of the story of Takitimu, the holy ark which, in the beginning brought the "cargo of gods" to New Zealand (Aotearoa: shining bright land), the narrative becomes a holy book (clearly the audience is primarily Maori, needing instruction: in contrast to *The Bone People*, much Maori speech is given without translation, thus adding a further mysterious dimension). The Matriarch herself had asked, "How can we prepare you when our houses of learning have long ago been destroyed by the Pakeha, and our religious precepts made mockery of by the crooked cross?" She herself will show him:

> "A world where gods and men commune. Where timelessness begins and there is no separation of past and present. A world energised with glowing forces and creatures of light fading in and out of the landscape."

The supernatural is immanent throughout the novel, in both dream and miraculous intervention in the temporal world: this can be menacing, and the narrator is pulled between the matriarch's uncompromising claims—that he guard his *mana*, ruthlessly grasp his inheritance—and the more compassionate humanity his mother urges upon him.

"Modern Western man feels ill at ease before many forms of manifestation of the sacred", wrote Mircea Eliade in his *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries*; in the belatedly guilt-ridden efforts by Australian whites to foster the revival of aboriginal cultures Shiva Naipaul found cant and self-deception ("Flight into Blackness", in *An Unfinished Journey*):

> ". . . the escape into an adventure playground of timelessness . . . is a condescending and profoundly flawed prescription for regeneration. Either the Aboriginal is or is not a citizen of Australia. And if he is (which is the case) he must face the consequences. It is not a 'race' that cries out for rescue, but the victims of a historical process, thousands of men, women and children."

The situation in New Zealand is comparable, despite the Kiri te Kanawas and the Witi Ihimaeras.

Ihimaera is himself New Zealand Consul in New York, representing one country, but his writing has reflected a desire to slough off the equivocal identity of the "brown Pakeha" and to recapture the spirit of Maoriness. Such acts of reclamation, as also in Keri Hulme, are symptomatic of a need to struggle free of the stifling blanket of assimilation, not felt as equal citizenship, that threatens a colonised people with the loss of its past, its ancestors (even a licensed multi-culturalism does not relieve these fears). So doing, such writers repossess a world-view that is indisputably theirs, but one may wonder whether its reclamation will lead to a new freedom or an old, regressive bondage. Again, Shiva Naipaul puts the awkward question:

> "At best, atavism is a harmless fantasy, not sustainable with any degree of persistent realism under skies criss-crossed by satellites and jet aircraft; at its worst, it must be considered a tragedy—a failure of nerve."

He recognised, too, from bitter experience, that for "those who have been colonised" the existential problem presents itself in its acutest form. "How to exist, how to become properly real—that is the question."

## Yü Chia Ao

Sky, milky way and morning mist blend
In the River of Stars, a thousand sails dance
As in a dream, my soul returns to heavenly palaces—
I hear the gods
Ask eagerly where I go?

The way is long. I sigh, the day late
What good to study poetry, write striking lines?
In ninety thousand li of wind, the roc just flies
Wind, do not stop
Blow the grass boat to the three mountains

*Li Ch'ing-chao*
*Translated by Julie Landau*

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# Books Encountered

**Important Nonsense.** By LIONEL ABEL. Prometheus Books, $22.95.

Eccentrically printed—misprints and pasted-in paragraphs—but pungent, argumentative essays by a Professor Emeritus at New York State, shrewdly attacking Sartre, defending Edmund Wilson, and laying about him zestfully, notably against deconstructionists. Quirkiest piece: a "pardon" for Arthur Koestler.

**A Little of All These: An Estonian Childhood.** By TANIA ALEXANDER. Cape, £12.50.

Plainly told but extraordinary true story, starting in Ingmar-Bergman-like "white nights" in idyllic Estonia, ending in Britain and World War Two. Tania's father was murdered when she was four: she found the body. Her mother was Moura Budberg, love of Gorky, Robert Bruce Lockhart, and H. G. Wells. Family photographs ornament Dickensian plot twists.

**Forever England: North and South.** By BERYL BAINBRIDGE. Duckworth/BBC Books, £9.95.

The book of the TV series, exploring six families—from Liverpool, Barnsley, and Northumberland, and from Hastings, Bentley, and Birmingham—and interweaving the author's own reminiscences, mainly of Liverpool. Impressionistic, unsurprising, but vivid. The North-South gap may last another generation.

**The Faber Book of Diaries.** Edited by SIMON BRETT. Faber & Faber, £12.95.

Entries for each day of the year, by diarists ranging (alphabetically) from J. R. Ackerley to Walter Yonge, (chronologically) from Henry Machyn to Jimmy Boyle, and (in fame) from Pepys to one Strother, who lacks both first name and dates. A book for the bedside table: pleasant browsing but hardly a good read.

**The Lost Summer: A Personal Memoir of F. Scott Fitzgerald.** By TONY BUTTITTA. Robson Books, £9.95.

The date: 1935. The place: Asheville, North Carolina. "A slight, blondish, collegiate-looking chap" appears at a bookshop in the George Vanderbilt Hotel. It's Fitzgerald, looking for the men's room. Some forty years later, the bookshop man recalls his talk, his drink, his affairs. Now reprinted with an introduction by Bryan Forbes, it's fascinating.

**The Literature Machine: Essays.** By ITALO CALVINO. Secker & Warburg, £16.00.

Disgracefully unindexed collection of articles, lectures, and interviews, on subjects including philosophy, science, the cinema, the Odyssey, Ovid, Ariosto, Voltaire, Balzac, Manzoni, Stendhal, Montale, and Barthes. Some are typically abstract: many have revealing resonance with Calvino's novels and stories.

**Searching for World Security: Understanding Global Armament and Disarmament.** By CURT GASTEYGER. Frances Pinter, £17.50.

Profound and comprehensive study by a Professor at the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, examining the realities and possibilities behind "disarmament" and "arms control", and urging concentration on other areas too: notably, common rules, institutions, information, regional cooperation.

**Selected Literary Criticism of Louis MacNeice.** Edited by ALAN HEUSER. Clarendon Press, Oxford, £19.50.

Very scholarly, worthy, but disappointingly scrappy selection of literary journalism: MacNeice's prose was much more casual than his verse. But it's good to have these occasional pieces, which illustrate his range and learning. One slip: Walter Allen's *New Statesman* pseudonym was "William Salter", not "Slater".

**The Selkirk Strip.** By FERDINAND MOUNT. Hamish Hamilton, £10.95.

Sparky, knowing novel about North London civil servant bedevilled by Falklands-style politico-military drama, but even more by his wife's cousin, Alan Breck Stewart, his face "long and mournful, an Easter Island god's with horn-rimmed spectacles added". Actually, a sort of Jamie Dixon.

**The European Tribe.** By CARYL PHILLIPS. Faber & Faber, £7.95.

Challenging tour of Europe, and reflection on it, by a writer born in St Kitts but brought to Britain by his family before he was one year old. "I could feel little empathy with the cultural bravado of a Eurocentric past": but he sees himself as a missionary for a less parochial view of the world.

**Virginia Woolf and the Problems of the Subject.** By MAKIKO MINOW-PINKNEY. Harvester Press, £28.50.

Densely written but sensible feminist commentary and analysis, only slightly overlapping with Alex Zwerdling's study of Virginia Woolf's context. Dr Minow-Pinkney notably argues that experimental, interior-monologue writing was no contradiction of her views on women, as some hard-line feminists allege.

**Words at Work: Lectures on Textual Structure.** By RANDOLPH QUIRK. Longman, £5.75.

Alert and absorbing examination, not simply of semantics and grammar, but of the tact and appropriateness of various linguistic forms, showing the audience (in Singapore) that language concerns communication in all senses, some of them very subtle, and including the canvassing of assent in the addressee.

**Judith Gautier: A Biography.** By JOANNA RICHARDSON. Quartet Books, £14.95.

The first full-length biography, even in French, of the first woman Academician, daughter of Théophile Gautier, wife of Catulle Mendès, probably mistress of Victor Hugo, inspiration of Wagner's *Parsifal*, and author of much exotic orientalism. The biographer's hand is practised and her translations are neat.

**Thomas Hobbes: Radical in the Service of Reaction.** By ARNOLD A. ROGOW. Norton, £15.00, $23.95.

Partly psychoanalytic interpretation of the author of *Leviathan*. The subtitle may suggest a belittling of Hobbes's pessimistic realism, implying that he read his own timidity and ambition into everyone: but the conclusion admits that in our century *Leviathan*'s diagnosis looks uncomfortably apt.

**The Precariously Privileged: A Professional Family in Victorian London.** By ZUZANNA SHONFIELD. Oxford University Press, £17.50.

Original, elegant, and accomplished study of an upwardly mobile medical family, seen through the diaries of Jeannette Marshall (1855-1935), with glimpses of Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, *et al.*, but above all showing social strains and uncertainties in a very superior but still faintly Pooterish world.

**The Hollywood Feature Film in Postwar Britain.** By PAUL SWANN. Croom Helm, £19.95.

A good thesis subject by an English Assistant Professor at Temple University, Pennsylvania, stressing especially "the ideological impact" of Hollywood movies and "cross-cultural exchange". Complements, but doesn't mention, Gerald Kaufman's *My Life in the Silver Screen*, undebauched by big-screen propaganda.

**Warren Beatty: A Life and a Story.** By DAVID THOMPSON. Secker & Warburg, £14.95.

Weird and wonderful combination of a biography, told in the historic present, and a parallel novel about a star named "Eyes", by the author of *Suspects*, whose cast was composed of *film noir* characters. Written without its subject's cooperation, it really amounts to the higher gossip plus pulp fiction.

*R.M.*

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# Out of the Gulag & into Exile

## *YURI ORLOV in conversation with NICHOLAS BETHELL*

IN THE BEGINNING I was treated quite carefully in the camp. The authorities there clearly did not quite know how they ought to treat me. But then in February 1979 I was deprived of my associate membership of the Armenian Academy of Sciences. This was a signal for them to tighten up.

I was put to work on lathes, cutting threading into the inside of metal tubes. I had done this type of work 45 years ago, during the War, and this was a help to me, except that most of those working with me were between 20 and 30 years old, while I was coming up to 60. It was an eight-hour-a-day shift, six days a week; it was so physically exhausting that I never fulfilled the norm.

In a labour camp you can be punished by being sent to the camp prison. This happened to me six times, for half-a-year each, making up half my actual term. In the prison I worked at a bench, weaving wire into metal grilles. Anatoli Koryagin, a doctor who had been imprisoned for speaking out against the abuse of psychiatry, was working at a nearby bench on a different shift; and he was one of those who helped me to approach the norm. But the authorities increased the norm twice—so as to tighten discipline by making it easier to punish the prisoners, and after that I lagged far behind.

The camp prison was not too bad, though, because they gave you proper boots and a jacket against the cold. Most important of all, at night we had a mattress, a pillow and a blanket each; so we could sleep.

The really awful punishment was the SHIZO, the *shtrafnoy isolyator* or "punishment isolation cell". After I was expelled from the Armenian Academy, they confiscated the scientific papers I had been working on in the camp. This confiscation was quite illegal—so I said that, in that case, I would refuse to work. For that I was sent to the SHIZO for five days. It was five days of complete isolation with no books, nothing to read, and nothing to write on. As a political prisoner I couldn't even have pieces of newspaper to use as toilet paper—they said I might read the print.

Every time they put me in the cell they took away my clothes and gave me just a light shirt, a pair of socks, and some linen trousers. It meant that I got very cold, especially at night. The temperature was supposed to be 18° Centigrade (according to the rules); but they only heat it up to that level when it is being officially measured for the formal record. In fact it gets down to 10°, very bad if you only have light clothing.

The great problem then was lack of sleep. The bunks were wooden planks held together with metal strips; they folded into the cell wall. Every night at about ten o'clock the guard opened your bunk with a key from the outside and closed it again at six in the morning. You have no blanket or bedding of any sort whatever.

Every night I used to rub the planks with my hands to warm them up. Then I would lie down, fall asleep, wake up again ten minutes later because of the cold, start rubbing the planks again with my hands, and so on, hour after hour, getting just a few minutes sleep at a time.

Our food consisted of 450 grammes of black bread a day and "hot food", if you can call it that, every second day—300 grammes of cabbage soup and half-a-cup of porridge. Also there was hot water—except that by the time they brought it from the kitchen it was no longer hot. I did eight terms of

YURI ORLOV, *a Soviet physicist who joined the Human Rights movement in the 1960s, in 1976 founded the Helsinki Group, which monitored the Soviet Union's observance of the "Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe", signed by Leonid Brezhnev in 1975. He was arrested in Moscow on 10 February 1977, charged with anti-Soviet agitation under Article 70 of the penal code, and, after fifteen months in Moscow's Lefortovo Prison, was sentenced to seven years at forced labour to be followed by five years of internal exile. In the spring of 1978 he started his sentence in Camp No. 37 in the Perm labour-camp complex in the northern Urals. On 5 October 1986 he was released from exile in "part-exchange" for the American journalist Nick Daniloff and was flown to the US; this interview took place in New York three days later.*

NICHOLAS BETHELL *sits on the Conservative benches in the House of Lords and is a Member of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. His books include "The Last Secret" (1974) and "The Great Betrayal" (Hodder, 1984). Among his articles in* ENCOUNTER *are "Katyn and the Little Conifers" (May 1977) and "After the Last Secret" (November 1975).*



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solitary confinement, two terms of five days, four of fifteen days, one of 30 days and one of 55 days—a total of 155 days. All that time I was dizzy through cold and lack of sleep. The purpose of the SHIZO is to break the prisoner's spirit.

A POLITICAL PRISONER is under particular pressure, because the authorities are under instructions to change his attitude and ideas. Ordinary criminals can just obey the rules, work hard, and they will be all right. Political prisoners have to be cracked. This is why the *KGB* surrounded me with a tight circle of prisoners whom they had broken previously and who did what they told them.

In my zone there were a lot of prisoners convicted of collaboration with Germany during World War II. The authorities like to remind the Soviet people about the War, so every year they arrest a few men for collaboration, even though it was decades ago. Usually they get fifteen years. They were under orders to keep an eye on me and to try and trap me in any way possible.

They tried to get me charged with theft. For instance, they would take the soap from the washroom and put it by my bunk. "*Orlov stole it*", they would say. Why had he done it? Orlov is not a thief. "*So as to create disorder in the camp.*" There had to be a political reason for all my offences. I was never charged with theft, but the idea was to keep the threat of such a charge always hanging over my head; it could have meant a new trial and another two or three years in the camp. So the pressure was psychological as well as physical.

The most serious incident was in September 1982 when a friend of mine, a dissident from Georgia, Mirab Chitava, was beaten up by violent criminals. The guards just watched it happening and did not interfere—except that, when it was over, they accused me of starting a fight, my aim being to start a "mutiny" or "sabotage the camp's work". It was a very serious matter indeed; it could have meant another seven years. There were bruises all over my back and I had a fever; but the doctor said that it was nothing, and that I could go to work as usual.

The doctors were quite unqualified. One was the wife of a senior camp officer, the other the wife of the *KGB* chief—so they treated me on a political basis. They said I was cheating, that I must have done something to make the thermometer go above normal. So off I went to work.

They did have some medicine, because it was important to keep the men at work; but as for dentists there were none at all and all of us now have rotten teeth. The only thing that made it all just bearable was the help I got from the other political prisoners. We helped each other out, and the authorities did not like it. They put in my annual report that I was a "bad influence" on the other prisoners. And it really was not true. Especially during the last two years, I was genuinely frightened of being charged and sentenced to another term—so I did not break any of the rules, not once. It did not stop them trying to pretend otherwise. I even got close to fulfilling my norm; but still I got a bad annual report.

The only thing I did occasionally was to try and communicate with the other prisoners. We used to leave notes for each other at the work-bench. We had to hide these notes very carefully, because the guards always searched between shifts, but it really kept us going to find a kind word from a friend. When I was ill—I was coughing blood for a month—one of the prisoners even got some medicine and hid it for me at the bench.

Many of Russia's best known prisoners of conscience were at camps in the Perm region. Anatoly Shcharansky was at camp No. 35. There was also Gleb Yakunin, the Orthodox Christian activist, and Alexander Goretoy, a Pentecostalist. I also remember a man called Kaparov, who was sentenced for "Marxism-Leninism"! It happens quite often that men who are beginning to think and challenge the Soviet authorities take Lenin as their hero, believing that the Soviet government had "betrayed Lenin's ideals", that the Party was not behaving as Lenin would have wished, or that the working class does not live as Lenin would have wanted. This is quite natural—since books about Marx and Lenin are the basis of all Soviet education; there is very little reading-matter available about non-Communist political thinkers. And, of course, one has to admit that Lenin was a more flexible Soviet leader (for instance, over his New Economic Policy) than his successors have been.

MY SEVEN YEAR TERM expired on 10 February 1984. Four days before that I was put on a prisoner transport to be taken to a small village called Kobyay, which is 220 miles north of Yakutsk in northern Siberia. These transports are the worst aspect of prison life in the Soviet Union. It took them *a whole month* (until 6 March) to get me from Perm in the Urals to Kobyay in Siberia. They took me from the camp to Perm city, then to Sverdlovsk, to Krasnoyarsk, to Irkutsk, to Yakutsk, then by plane north along the River Lena to Sangar, and then to Kobyay itself, 40 miles to the south-west.

As far as Irkutsk they took me by train in those famous "Stolypin" prison-wagons, with 20-25 men crammed into a cell the size of an ordinary compartment, about 120 prisoners in each wagon. It was all chaos and confusion, but we were the ones who suffered. Salted herring was part of our diet, but it made us thirsty. The guards did not have time to give us water; and when eventually we got the water, they did not have time to take us to the lavatory. Also the windows of the compartments were usually broken; so it was very cold, although we did have warm clothes. The bunks were made of metal.

At stops along the way they would take us from the train to a transit prison, forcing us to march at the double with all our things and "encouraging" anyone who could not make it. Once, after marching me to a transit prison, all the cells were full, so they put me in a punishment cell. The next morning the guards had changed and the new shift started feeding me a bread-and-water diet, thinking I had been sentenced to solitary confinement. I shouted to the guard to give me proper food and he said, "*Shut your face or I'll put my fist down it!*" I told him that my term of imprisonment was finished; that I should not be in prison, let alone in solitary

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confinement; that I was on my way to exile; but he would not believe me. How was he to know? By the time I got to Yakutsk I had pneumonia, and I didn't fully recover until after two or three weeks in Kobyay.

North of Yakutsk there is permafrost. The ground is frozen to a depth of six or seven feet. In the summer the top layer melts, turning the whole area into lakes and bogs. There is no way that anyone can build a permanent road in such conditions; so every year, around mid-October when it freezes, they build a "winter road" on the frozen surface that lasts until mid-April. After that and all through the summer, the only way of travelling the 40 miles from Sangar to Kobyay is by plane.

It was only when I got to Sangar that they took the handcuffs off me and I was taken by car to Kobyay by the people I was going to work for as a janitor. I lived at first in a caravan, a mobile home for building workers, about 25 of us in bunk beds. Teams of workers used it on a shift basis. There were about 3,000 people in the village, almost all of them Yakutian (which is a Mongolian tribe), with just a dozen or so Russians. So it was no wonder that they were suspicious of me, that children threw stones at the caravan, and that a gang of men beat me up, because the local authorities kept telling everyone that I was "*an enemy of the people*".

I wanted to rent a small house and I had the money, because my scientist friends clubbed together and held collections for me. They were very loyal and good friends. Several of them travelled to Kobyay to see me. Only I couldn't rent anywhere, because the police said it was illegal to sell me anything. It was a lie, of course; and my wife, Irina, wrote complaints to everyone in Moscow about it, saying that I was being treated illegally. Eventually it worked and I was allowed to buy a lease on a house for 3,000 roubles. It was a three-year lease, enough to last me till the end of my exile.

EXILE is the most lenient type of punishment according to Soviet law. I could subscribe to newspapers and magazines. I could not leave "the area", which in the case of Kobyay was very small, just a couple of miles in any direction; but after a few months I was allowed to walk in the woods, and I could receive visitors. My scientist friends helped me build a greenhouse. (Nothing will grow in Kobyay without one.) And I grew potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes.

Irina came as often as she could and so did my sons, as well as my scientist friends. In other words, they ended up by treating me in exile according to the law, which is what they try to do if possible. Irina also made them give me an identity document. And she suffered for it. She was searched once in Yakutsk when she was on her way to see me, and she could only take private work in Moscow, as a secretary or child-minder, so as to have time to come to Kobyay as often as possible. She couldn't live with me, although legally she had the right to, because there was no work for her. In Moscow she worked on a week-by-week basis, so as to be able to get away easily.

She first had to fly to Yakutsk, which is six-and-a-half hours in a big plane, an *Ilyushin-62*; then from Yakutsk to Sangar in another plane, much smaller; and from Sangar to Kobyay, just 40 miles, in a third plane. It can be a journey of several days and a round trip from Moscow cost 350 roubles.

I worked as a janitor for just six months, because on 13 August 1984 it was my 60th birthday, and by law I could retire and claim my pension. So I got my pension, which was 67 roubles a month. It was so small because a Soviet pension is calculated according to your highest-earning five years in the last ten years of your working life. I had been on a high salary in my 40s, but as for the years from 50-to-60 the last seven years were spent in prison and for the first three I was unemployed. I was dismissed at the beginning of 1974. So that's why I got only 67 roubles a month. It was enough to live on, since I had the food I grew. I bought cabbages from a farm, and in the summer I caught carp and picked mushrooms.

THE FIRST I KNEW THAT something was happening was on Sunday, 28 September, when one of the local *KGB* bosses, a big man in civilian dress (probably a captain), came to my little house and gave me one hour to pack my things. Then he took me to the airport on the back of his motor-bike, with my suitcase in my hand and another *KGB* officer in the sidecar. We got to Kobyay airport, with its earth runway, and flew to Sangar where there was a special military aircraft waiting. We flew to Yakutsk, where the local *KGB* handed me over to a Moscow *KGB* group. We flew north and spent the night in a hotel.

They were very polite to me. We ate together in the hotel, and they guarded me discreetly. They gave me no information about where we were going or what was going to happen to me. The next day we flew on to Norilsk and Pechora, across northern Siberia—and I thought they might be going to settle me in some place even further north, where no one could visit me at all. True, I also thought it possible that there had been a "political development" that would lead to my release, because I had followed the row over Daniloff (in Moscow) and Zakharov (in New York) in the Soviet press. I had no idea though, that the decision had already been taken.

The worst moment was when we finally reached Moscow. They took me to Lefortovo Prison on 29 September, to the office of a Criminal Investigator, who told me that I was a suspect in an investigation into "the Solzhenitsyn fund for the aid of political prisoners". He said that there was a suspected link between the fund and my Helsinki monitoring group. This was just a device to hold me in prison. By law they had the right to keep me for three days of preliminary investigation. It was another example of how they prefer to keep their own laws, if possible, even if it means inventing absurd pretexts.

So I stayed in Lefortovo for three days, not knowing if I was going to be set free or sent back to prison for a second term. On 2 October the investigator informed me that, by decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, I was deprived of my Soviet citizenship and sentenced to be sent into exile abroad. We then had a discussion—in which I said that I ought to be pardoned, not sentenced to exile, since there

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were legal irregularities in my trial in 1978. Of course he wouldn't accept that, and I stayed in Lefortovo. Again they were acting legally because they were entitled to detain me as a man sentenced to exile by decree. And so I stayed until they put me on the plane to New York on Sunday morning, October 5th.

As soon as this first hectic period is over, I shall look for a university where I can resume my scientific work.

THE WORLD'S main guarantee of peace, I believe, is not disarmament but the building up of trust and confidence between peoples. For instance, Britain and France both have nuclear weapons, but you're not going to use them against each other. Your links are too close for that. The same sort of links must be built up between the Soviet Union and the West, and this can only be done by making the Soviet Union a far more open society, allowing a free press, non-violent dissent, different political ideas, and foreign travel.

Disarmament is not the main thing. Nuclear weapons can never be entirely done away with. Even if they are all destroyed, factories remain, the technology remains, they can always be rebuilt if a country feels threatened by conventional forces. So the only way to prevent it is by confidence-building measures, as envisaged in the Helsinki Agreement.

Millions must be allowed to travel—and freely, without being guarded all the time as they are now. And this is why the human rights movement is so important. People must not be arrested for providing information—if they are, it is not only a violation of human rights, it also makes nuclear war more likely. And if Western countries raise the question of human rights in the Soviet Union, it is not interference in their internal affairs; it is essential if nuclear war is to be avoided.

Gorbachov says that he wants "greater openness", but for the moment he is not doing much to bring it about. My hope, though, lies in the fact that a more open society is now necessary to him. His country is becoming technologically backward and he *must* allow more Soviet people to travel, even if only specialists. Our task is now to convince him to allow the masses to travel also. It would not be a threat to the Soviet Union; on the contrary, I think that the USSR would become a lot more powerful if it were to adapt itself to democracy. It would develop more quickly, if there was freedom to criticise and to manoeuvre economically. With its enormous resources, the Soviet Union could really prosper in such conditions.

This cannot be done overnight: it must take a little time. But it need not take as long a time as Gorbachov seems to envisage. The great barrier, I think, is not Gorbachov himself or the top leadership, but the middle ranks of Soviet bureaucracy who have become so firmly dug into the system as it exists today. The *KGB*, for instance, is a very strong negative force: they want to preserve their power and role in society. Implementation of my ideas would reduce this power.

I still have some hopes in Gorbachov—it's too early to say, though . . . we'll have to see. He has improved things over criticism of the authorities. Regional Party Secretaries, for instance, can now be criticised in the press; so can Ministers; but not the Central Committee or the Politburo. One can criticise the police, but not the Army and certainly not the *KGB*. So there are some small steps.

On the other hand, the situation over Jewish emigration has got worse. Even fewer are being allowed to leave than before Gorbachov came to power. I think though that this is a card that Gorbachov and the leadership will play if and when it comes to the point that they need better relations with the West and a more liberal policy at home. All these concessions over human rights, myself included, are cards in Mr Gorbachov's hand, and he plays them when it suits him. For the moment Jewish emigration is not necessary for him, so they stay in the Soviet Union as hostages, *for the moment*, ready to be used in the future.

I EXPLAINED MOST OF THIS to President Reagan, though not in such detail, because there wasn't time; and I told him that this was why he really should defend and try to free the Soviet Union's political prisoners, who are as it were the pioneers of this openness that we want.

It would be no threat to the Soviet Union to release these people; there are not so many of them. The number of actual political dissidents in prison, those sentenced under Articles 64 ("treason") and 70 ("anti-Soviet agitation"), I would put at something between 200 and 300, not counting "collaborators with Nazi Germany" or those genuinely guilty of spying for the West. This was, I think, 276, in a list recently compiled by Tatyana Sergeyevna Khodorovich.

The number of those convicted of other, less serious, political charges, under Article 190 (which carries a maximum of three years' imprisonment), is harder to calculate. There are many convicted of offences connected with religion. There are people who refuse to serve in the Army—the Pentecostalists, for instance, or Jews who wish to emigrate, or others who simply object to serving as a matter of conscience.

The figure of 10,000, I think, is too high; but it may be in the range of 2,000 to 3,000. One can work this out roughly, as I did, by asking prisoners or former prisoners, either in transit prisons or before I was arrested, what camp they were in and where the camps are situated. One comes out with a figure of 1,000 to 1,500 camps with an average of 2,000 prisoners in each, making a total of two to three million prisoners actually in labour camps. And in each camp, we calculate, there are a small number, say two persons, one in each thousand, convicted under Article 190. This is, of course, very approximate; and it does not include those who have finished their terms and are at forced labour in exile, the so-called *khimiki*. There are more of these than there are in the camps, maybe four or five million.

THE PRISON POPULATION in the Soviet Union will decline, I believe, because people are drinking less: and many crimes are drink-related. I certainly agree with this part of Mr Gorbachov's programme, and I think it has a chance of success, except that soon there is bound to be a big problem over

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home-made alcohol (*samogon*), especially in country districts. Drink is one of the Soviet Union's greatest problems—there is no other country in the world, I believe, where alcoholism is so widespread.

Less drinking will mean less fighting and less hooliganism generally; and these are the main offences for which young Soviet men are sentenced. This can only benefit the Soviet state. It is no longer the case that a huge labour-camp population helps the Soviet economy. Maybe it was the case in the 1920s, when dams and canals were built by forced labour. Now all they do is feed the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the *KGB*. The Ministry wants to keep a large number of prisoners, so as to maintain its manning levels and its influence generally.

Forced labour is not conducive to high productivity. You cannot have top-quality equipment or an efficient production line in a labour camp; prisoners do not have the skills for it, and there is no point in training them because they are here today and gone or moved to another camp tomorrow. There is no stability. It was different 50 years ago: the Soviet Union then did not claim to have a "technologically up-to-date economy". Now it claims exactly that; and Gorbachov talks about our "backwardness" in certain areas. This is one of them. The camps are a relic of the past.

THE CHANGES I PROPOSE would be equivalent in degree to the Khrushchev reforms of the 1950s. Under Stalin "the Curtain" was impenetrable. Khrushchev lifted it a bit, and I now want Gorbachov to lift it a lot more.

If such reforms were implemented, I do not think that millions would take the opportunity of leaving the country. Some would in the beginning, but then it would settle down. I certainly would not want to leave in such a situation. Many would want to leave for a few years, to study or to earn

## *Message from the Ukraine*

*Kharkov*

DR ANATOLI KORYAGIN, **the dissident Soviet psychiatrist, told me in an interview that he did not wish to live anv longer under the Soviet system and appealed in a formal statement to Western states to give him and his family political asylum.**

**In 1981 Dr Koryagin was sentenced to 12 years hard labour and exile, later increased to 14 years, for being the first Soviet psychiatrist to document the abuse of Soviet psychiatry for political purposes.**

**Of the six years he served, he told me he spent more than two on hunger strike in protest at denial of prisoners' rights. He was force-fed. He spent over half a year in punishment cells and solitary confinement.**

**Nine days ago he was released by Mr Gorbachov as part of a campaign to improve the Soviet Union's human rights image and to swing the Russian intelligentsia behind him.**

**Dr Koryagin, however, remains unmoved by the improvements. The dissident psychiatrist, aged 48, sees little hope for real change in the foreseeable future.**

THE STATEMENT READS: *"Like all my ancestors, I was born and bred in Russia. I became a doctor and worked as a psychiatrist. It so happened that my convictions came into conflict with the Soviet socio-political system and led me publicly to condemn the practice of psychiatric persecution in the Soviet Union and to try to stop it.*

*"The Soviet authorities declared me 'anti-Soviet' and threw me behind bars where, for six years, they have subjected me to systematic and calculated physical and mental torture which never stopped for a minute. They tried to force me to abandon my convictions and admit guilt before the Soviet state.*

"THERE, **in Soviet concentration camps and prisons, my final conviction grew that the Soviet socio-political system, based on the dictatorship of the single party, is, by its very nature, deeply anti-human because it prescribes as its main goal the direct and absolute obedience of the human personality to the machine of state.**

**Man is regarded as the means to achieve 'historical goals', like a biological specimen whose features are worth manipulating for research.**

"AFTER RETURNING FROM PRISON *I have learned with pain and horror the kind of deprivation and repressions inflicted on my wife and small children. For many years I was regularly forbidden to see them. [He saw his wife just twice.]*

*"My sons' persecution at school and where they live prevented their natural development. In the end the childhood and youth of my elder son was crippled. [Aged 17, his eldest of three sons, Ivan, was sentenced to three years for 'Hooliganism'. He has served half the term. Dr Koryagin says he will not leave the Soviet Union without him.]*

"ONCE FREED, **I have not, to my regret, noticed any essential shift in the Soviet people's way of life, no matter what the official propaganda organs say about the 'Democratisation' of the country.**

**"I see the same almighty power of the KGB and MVD (Interior Ministry) over ordinary people, who, in turn, remain without a voice, without rights and indifferent to everything emanating 'from on high.'**

"AFTER ALL I HAVE SEEN *and lived through, I shall never be able to tolerate the Soviet totalitarian régime. Nor, morever, can I ever voluntarily accept the conditions of life here for myself and my family. I want my sons to develop in a free society.*

*"Besides, as well as working as a doctor, I am determined to continue legally to work on humanitarian questions, for human rights and freedoms.*

*"I think progress in these fields is a prerequisite for the development of any civilised society, but the Soviet authorities have already proved to me and to the whole world that they consider that type of activity to be anti-Soviet and that people who engage in it should be locked up.*

"IN VIEW OF THE ABOVE, **I declare that for purely political motives I do not wish to live under the Soviet system and I appeal to the heads of Governments of Western states to give me and my family political asylum."**

*Xan Smiley*

*in the* SUNDAY TELEGRAPH (*London*)

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money; but most would return. People prefer to live in their own country. People are not hungry in the Soviet Union, and "one's country is one's country". Many Jews wish to leave because there is another country where things are generally better for them and to which they feel attached. The vast majority of the rest would stay.

I asked President Reagan to tell Mr Gorbachov that, if these reforms are not implemented, peace cannot be guaranteed. This is what the West should do, keep repeating this to the Soviet leadership, that these reforms are the best guarantee of peace, that without them, without a more open Soviet society, there can be no real *détente*.

I would not support a move from a socialist to a capitalist society. Each country has its history, and this creates limits for any programme of reform. In our case we had a revolution which destroyed a capitalism that was just beginning. We never had the sort of capitalism that you did in Britain. If we were now to renounce this, it would be a national humiliation, leading to a terrible cynicism and disintegration of morale. This is bad for any nation in any circumstance.

So let us keep socialism, but a democratic socialism, with an opposition, free trade unions, and so-called "bourgeois freedom", but without private industry on a very great scale. I would not be against private craftsmen or a certain amount of private enterprise in service industries, for instance, or in agriculture, where there might also be a return to the co-operative system.

I do not want to label myself as "a socialist" generally. I just think that for the Soviet Union there must be socialism, but with freedom. I am not talking about England or Germany; I don't know enough about the history or political background. I am just a socialist for Russia. In general, the only principle I support is that of a free pluralist political system. And as for future generations, no one can tell.

I SPOKE TO Mr Reagan about "openness" in Soviet society and about the need to defend those individuals in the Soviet Union who defend that openness. I mentioned several individuals, such as Andrei Sakharov and Anatoli Marchenko—just a few, because to mention many is as pointless as to mention none. Marchenko was one of the first to join my group, and now he is living in very difficult conditions in Chistopol Prison. He has declared a hunger strike in the run-up to the Vienna (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) review conference. He is very stubborn, and he may well continue his hunger strike a long time.[1]

There are some who compare him to the IRA hunger-strikers in your country; but this is not fair, because the IRA have taken up arms, whereas Marchenko and other Russian dissidents have never done this. There is no problem with terrorism in the Soviet Union. The *KGB* say, "We imprison dissidents for what they do, not for what they think. . . ." But in fact there is very little that we actually do. We merely express our thoughts.

Gorbachov said, "We do not imprison people for their convictions." What he means is that you must keep your ideas in your head and never open your mouth; and that is absolutely pointless. The expression of a conviction is, in his view, an act for which people can be punished. However, such behaviour by the Soviet Government is a clear violation of the Helsinki Agreement.

[1] Anatoli Marchenko, who spent most of his adult life in prison or exile, died in Chistopol Prison. On 28 November last year he had written to his wife asking for a food-parcel. On 8 December she received a telegram informing her of his death.

On 16 December, a week before returning to Moscow from internal exile in Gorki, Andrei Sakharov spent the better part of his famous telephone conversation with Mr Gorbachov reproaching the Soviet leader over the death of his friend. Marchenko had, he said, been "murdered" over a period of years by the brutality of the *KGB* and the Soviet penal administration. He was murdered, Sakharov believes, because of his book, *My Testimony*, written over twenty years ago, and translated into many languages. See "Sakharov Speaks: Freeing the Slaves", *The Observer*, 18 January 1987.

## Street Names

There is a dream of street names.
A sign proclaims your name, or it may be Napoleon's,
or a nostalgic name like Cranston's or Joe Lyon's.
As someone said, my friends have turned to Squares
and I myself am dying to be a Terrace,
a small one in any decent town would do, London or Paris. . . .
And you come across an unknown gazetteer
like a telephone directory of all
the dead whom you can never call.
The streets commemorate musicians,
authors, artists, soldiers, politicians,
people who got in there by mistake.
To find your way about you need to wake
but the signs are torn down and nobody cares.
That is the dream of street names.

*George Szirtes*

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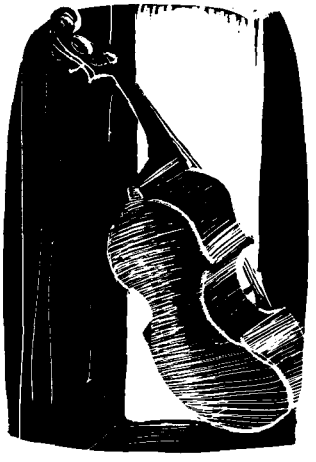
## *FROM THE OTHER SHORE*

# On the Trans-exhumation of Corpses

## *By Mstislav Rostropovich*



MY MEMORY DRAGS certain isolated details from my bygone existence, like blurred smudges from my Soviet past. How can I forget, for example, that at the Moscow Conservatory, in addition to music, they taught me "Marxism-Leninism" (this was obligatory for all students in the USSR).

I took exams, I was given grades; but when it was all over, everything was effaced from my memory with supersonic speed. There remained only fragments of the titles of certain books or articles, the recollection of certain (apparently "rightist") deviations, of certain (apparently "leftist") maladies, and innumerable tracts entitled *Concerning the Question of . . . .*

Recently I checked our encyclopaedia. Stalin all by himself wrote a plethora of articles entitled "Concerning the Question of . . .", and it would seem that the classic authors of Marxism had many questions to be concerned with. When I lived in the Soviet Union, I too was beset by many questions, but came up with very few answers.

Today things are different. When a question arises or a mystery looms, I gladly seek to explore it, and now and then even solve it. But there is one obsessive question for which I have not yet found the answer. It concerns the dragging around of corpses—not only inside Russia (as happened under Stalin), but also abroad. During my ten years of exile from the USSR, yet another famous corpse has been trans-exhumed. The first was that of the composer Alexander Glazunov; the second that of the singer Fyodor Chaliapin. In each case the corpse was removed from France.

A few Russian remains still lie in French graveyards. For example, Anatoly Lunarcharsky rests in peace on the Côte d'Azur. No one pursues him. What earthly good to the Kremlin would be one more Minister of Culture? About questions of taste, as the saying goes, there is no point in arguing; but in questions of corpses the Soviet Government appears to show impeccable judgment. It is when the object of its attention is still alive that its taste has often lapsed. For that very reason it may well be necessary to adjust one's taste—even after half-a-century—to make it look as though the very Soviet earth had pardoned its prodigal sons.

Such a posthumous pardon has been extended even to those buried in Soviet cemeteries, since their works no longer pose any problem to an obtuse leadership, and they themselves no longer dissent or resist. Thus pardoned, Dostoevsky (though his diaries have not been published in their entirety, and his correspondence only in an expurgated form) reposes in peace—as do Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Khachaturian, Bulgakov, Pasternak, Zoshchenko, Akhmatova. And now they have "pardoned" Chaliapin.

I have read many memoirs of the life and career of Chaliapin, as well as his book *Soul and Mask* (in its complete, not in its Soviet, edition). The impression I gathered was that to his dying day he did not forgive the persecutors who drove him from his homeland and who smeared him with insults for no good or obvious reason. There are persons still alive who claim that his desire was "never to return".

In the preface to *Soul and Mask*, he wrote: "I will not conceal the fact that the homesickness which afflicts many Russians abroad is not part of my make-up. . . . I normally do not feel homesick." Chaliapin's widow, Marya Valentinova, told Andrei Sedykh, editor of *Novoye Russkoye Slovo* (an émigré Russian newspaper published in New York): "Fyodor Ivanovich never had the intention of returning to Soviet Russia." And when they met, Chaliapin himself said to Sedykh: "I'm not going back to Russia. Enough is enough. In Russia they rubbed my face in mustard. . . ." So they did; but today they seem to be smearing it in honey.

Chaliapin's daughter, Dassya, told K. D. Pomerantsev that, in answer to persistent invitations to return to the Soviet Union, Fyodor Ivanovich would say, "Alive or dead, I won't go back to those bastards."

But now they have brought him back—to be sure, without his wife, who has been allowed to lie alone, in the old half-filled tomb. As the Soviet newspapers reported, Chaliapin's ashes were transported back "according to the wishes of the children." From this we must conclude that it was actually the children's wish that their parents should be posthumously divorced.

DID THEY bring back the ashes of the great Chaliapin, who detested the Bolsheviks, because Russia has at long last become free? Because something has changed, because people can breathe more freely, can travel abroad, can carry on discussions without being bludgeoned, or even because art has finally attained its full freedom?

No. Today, as yesterday, fellow-artists like Kandinksy and Chagall would have to flee abroad to achieve the full flowering of their talents. Brilliant Soviet ballet stars, having fled their country, have pursued vertiginous careers in the West, adding new glory to the great traditions of Russian ballet.

The reburial of Fyodor Chaliapin was obviously just one more farce, and it came at a particularly opportune moment for Soviet propaganda. First a certain Oleg Bitov returned, followed by Stalin's daughter, and then by a couple of So-



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viet soldiers who had been taken prisoner in Afghanistan. Clearly, the addition of Chaliapin, be it only of his remains, gives a significantly greater weight to this particular "company".

E. Nesterenko, a basso from the Bolshoi Theatre troupe, undertook to deliver an oration on the occasion of this second burial of Chaliapin's body in his new Soviet (but "Soviet" means "excellent") grave. Several years ago Nesterenko, who had been allowed to sing at a Kremlin reception to honour Brezhnev's birthday, wrote that this had been "the happiest day" of his life. And if he had been asked to sing on the occasion of Andropov's birthday (it seems he wasn't asked)? Would he have ventured to say that this was a less happy day? Or for Chernenko's birthday? On which of all those days would he have been the happiest?

The new "sub-Chaliapins" from the Bolshoi Theatre not only do not have Chaliapin's talent (it is not given to everyone); they haven't a trace of his spiritual honesty and uprightness. Accordingly, they cultivate their careers on a dungheap of Party cards and by toadying to the mighty of their world.

Could Chaliapin ever have stooped to such grovelling? We have his widow's word for it that while he was still living in the Soviet Union a certain theatre official began to explain to him just how much the Soviet régime was doing on behalf of Art. Fyodor Ivanovich suddenly exploded: "What kind of a régime is that? It's not a régime, it's just shit! What does it understand about Art? . . ."

It was at Chaliapin's specific behest that the following words, carefully chosen while he was alive, were engraved on his tombstone:

*Fyodor Ivanovich Chaliapin,*
*Opera Singer,*
*Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur.*

For it is true that no other Russian singer or actor ever reached the rank of Commander—which is more than one can say for the title of "Popular Artist of the Republic", first awarded to him and then subsequently withdrawn by the Soviet authorities.

After the trans-exhumation of Chaliapin's remains, it will clearly be safer for famous Russians (for famous actors and authors there will surely be) to be buried on the farther side of the Atlantic. Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky, for example (whom I was privileged to meet during his lifetime and who despised the Soviet régime), took the risk of having himself buried in Venice, next to Diaghilev. Just wait and see—it won't be long before *they* start trying to persuade his son to apply for "separation papers".

If he had not happened to die in America, it would have been difficult for Sergei Vassilievich Rachmaninov to remain interred. But, once buried, to get a body out of America is another matter. Perhaps the USSR would have offered to exchange Rachmaninov not simply for one corpse, but for a hundred of them—much as they do with spies. But the CIA, so far as known, has nothing in Soviet graveyards to disinvest. There is no basis for an East-West exchange.

One who rests uneasily, albeit in her native land, is Marina Tsvetayeva. Of her own accord, that fine poet returned in 1939 from France to Russia: she wanted to live and die in her homeland. Living was difficult, but dying, in the land of "positive heroes", was simple. Rope and hook sufficed; she hanged herself. There was no need to transport the body elsewhere; it was tossed into the first available hole, and forgotten. If Marina Tsvetayeva had not returned when she did, today they would be dragging her back in a sealed coffin, and the First Secretary of the Writers Union would turn up with tears in his eyes to pronounce a moving speech about "the Russian earth lying softly, like an eiderdown, upon her."

To be sure, reposing in the cemetery of Novodevitche is more prestigious than to be dumped somewhere in the graveyard of Yelabug. In terms of rank, this places one somewhere between the Kremlin Wall and the German Cemetery, more or less along the lines of the *Beryozki* food-stores—worse than the well-stocked stores reserved for members of the Central Committee, but much better than the shops for ordinary mortals. And her daughter would not have had to endure sixteen years of incarceration in the Gulag.

And where are the tombs of the stage director Meyerhold, of the poets Gumilyov and Mandelstam, of the writers Babel and Pilniak, of Academician Vavilov, Metropolitan Venyamin, and of all those nameless immortals who vanished too swiftly to become properly known to us? They litter the bone-strewn earth of Siberia. Trains rumble over their bones now, and speeding cars disperse them (or wolves, four-footed or biped, continue to pursue them).

Only to the Russian undertakers does it really make a difference. They are not looking for your non-existent graves—it would stir up too much commotion to no purpose. How much easier to transport bones from the neatly marked tombs of Paris! The work is less sordid, the esteem far greater.

I often wonder how it is that so many great Western composers and performers who died outside their own countries are allowed to repose in peace. Why do their governments not drag them back to their native lands? The earth, wherever they may be, must be as light as down. Beethoven and Cherubini, Rossini and Shimanovsky, Handel and Scarlatti, Boccherini and Kreisler—why have *they* not been dragged around? Doubtless because those countries had clear consciences, for they had not driven their prophets into exile.

As for Karl Marx, he rests on English soil in London's Highgate Cemetery, and is visited by Soviet delegations of peace-fighters who leave their warheads at home.

A correspondent for *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (in its 31 October 1984 number) had this to say of Chaliapin's reburial:

> "The last years of Fyodor Ivanovich Chaliapin's life were spent far from his homeland, and this was the great tragedy of his life and creative work."

And who, O comrades, drove him from his homeland? This was above all a tragedy for Soviet art and for connoisseurs of music.

I hope that the Soviet government is not going to start

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planning the re-disposal of my body. Will they somehow manage to drag a tiny portion of my spirit over there, and undertake to "revive" it?

Last year the Moscow Conservatory, from which I graduated and to which I devoted more than twenty years of teaching, commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the birth of my teacher, S. M. Kozolupov. Special sessions lasted several days: the speeches flowed forth, one after the other, and there were torrential repetitions of the names of scores of his students. Only one of his pupils, perhaps not the worst, was never mentioned by name—myself.

And what if I should soon die?

No doubt about it, they will press a button, and my spirit will be flown back within the walls of the Moscow Conservatory. There are other, simpler ways in which one can be "brought back". They could, for example, restore my

## *My Friend Prokofiev*

FIFTY OEUVRES! **This is the first time that a cycle on such a scale has been organised around Prokofiev anywhere in the world, including the Soviet Union. It is a real joy to me that the initiative should have come from Paris. Prokofiev was very close to France, and after his return to the Soviet Union, he made no secret of it. He did not come right out and say that he was nostalgic, but it was plain to see.**

**It is the same love for France that I find expressed in his opera "War and Peace", even if the subject is not exactly Francophile. . . . But the opera's literary source is itself a skilful blend of the French and the Russian. In the salons described by Tolstoy, they spoke French; even during the Napoleonic invasion the two cultures remained in tune with each other. But Prokofiev was also utterly Russian, more Russian than Shostakovich; Prokofiev's music smells of Russia.**

DURING HIS LATER YEARS, *Prokofiev was obsessed by "War and Peace". He had written the libretto with Mira Mendelssohn: they were in love, and had just been evacuated to Alma-Ata. Prokofiev intended "War and Peace" to be a mighty epic, the Russian counterpart of "The Ring of the Nibelung": he had in mind a very lengthy work, to be performed over two evenings. But they soon ran into some major obstacles, and firstly the fact that the opera houses did not want to venture upon such a complex undertaking. It is also true that the Russian public was not exactly queuing up to hear Prokofiev, except as a ballet composer. So it was decided to abridge the original work and give it "more reasonable" dimensions, to fit it into a single evening. In any case Prokofiev was no stranger to that: he often wrote several versions of the same work, unlike Shostakovich, who only put his name to one definitive version.*

*The only time Shostakovich retouched anything was in his "Lady Macbeth", following a severe warning from the political authorities—which caused a scandal. They told him:* **"It's impossible to go back to the first version, especially when it was so successful!"** *Shostakovich would give birth to his child, and then was usually indifferent as to its future. Whereas Prokofiev had a kind of childlike attachment and affection for his works; his music brought him great pleasure, and he loved to return to his old scores. But with "War and Peace" it was the government that compelled him to cut his work. Because the criticism was "justified", he had to submit to it; and he never stopped thinking about it. In the little village where we used to spend the summer, we would go out for a walk at night to light the street-lamps, and to talk. . . . He told me again and again:* **"I don't want to die without hearing my complete 'War and Peace' again."** *He died without having had that pleasure.*

HE HAPPENED TO DIE **on 5 March 1953, on the same day as Stalin. Stalin had taken no special interest in "War and Peace", and that was just as well; because if he had heard even two bars that he didn't understand he would have raised hell. He would not tolerate anything that eluded his grasp; and in that event he would refuse it any right to existence. Of course this reaction did not operate solely in the realm of music, but also in that of literature (which is what impelled him to act against the poet Anna Akhmatova). It also operated in the sciences (which caused him to reject work done on heredity). It was the same with linguistics, and so on.**

**Prokofiev, at the end of his life, was very ill, and the doctors had reached the same diagnosis as for Stalin. The musician, therefore, followed the bulletins on Stalin's health with the greatest attention. In the Soviet Union in those days everybody persuaded themselves of Stalin's "immortality". But Stalin died, and so did Prokofiev, 40 minutes later; realising perhaps that nothing could save him.**

LATER ON, *I directed "War and Peace" in the abridged version. That was the time when I was looking after Solzhenitsyn, and they wanted to throw me out of the Bolshoi. For "War and Peace" they allowed me three rehearsals! Rozhdestvenski told me on the telephone:* **"It's impossible in three rehearsals. . . . If you accept you're asking for trouble. . . . I am your friend. Believe me! . . ."** *So then, before going to the Bolshoi, I made a detour to the cemetery—and I asked Prokofiev for help—and the result was something of a triumph.*

I OFTEN **think about "War and Peace". Yes, it is Prokofiev's masterpiece! Some people may argue that his Third Concerto or his Fifth Symphony are more perfect works; and that is true. But the French, who appreciate the moulds on some of their cheeses, will understand me—there are a few Russian moulds in "War and Peace", and we Russians like that!**

*Mstislav Rostropovich*

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PARIS HAS BEEN *paying homage to the most famous 20th-century Russian composer—Sergei Prokofiev, who was born in 1891 and died in 1953—with the performance of a cycle of his works. Mstislav Rostropovich conducted for the occasion (with the French National Orchestra and the Choirs of Radio France) the complete concert version of Prokofiev's opera "War and Peace". His remarks were first published in "Le Point" (Paris).*

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name and that of Galina Vishnyevskaya to the editions of the works that Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Khachaturian, and others dedicated to us.

Or else, in the book devoted to the Tchaikovsky Prize Competition that was published in Moscow, they could restore my face to its proper place in the photograph of the first jury chosen for the cello competition—my face, through a manifest trick of photomontage, has been replaced by that of some inscrutable *KGB*east. On that jury I was seated between my understudies, Gregor Piatigorsky and K. Vilkomirsky. But today the person shown seated in the presiding chair is no cellist, and, as the Russian saying has it, "is clearly not from our village. . . ." I should add that this photomontage was not of a very high technical level. (Probably the filming apparatus, purchased for this purpose in America, had not yet arrived.)

IT IS TIME to close on a serious note this brief exploration of the Soviet system's lively relationship with corpses.

In 1942, during World War II, my father died in Orenburg. Our family did not have sufficient money to arrange a proper tomb for him. It was only towards the end of the War, in 1945, after I had earned a bit of hard cash—from a first prize in an All-Union concert of musical instrumentalists—that I was able to return to Orenburg and honour the memory of my first music teacher, my beloved father. I put up a cross, and around it a fence which I painted myself. On the cross I hung a plaque reading: "*Leopold Vitoldovich Rostropovich, Artist Emeritus of the RSFSR, Professor.*"

Years later, shortly before my wife and I were hounded from Russia, I learned that they had long since stopped burying people in that particular graveyard in Orenburg, and they were soon going to level it in order to build something or other on top. I was much upset, and with the promised help of friends who had stayed on in Russia, was about to embark on the incredibly complicated procedure needed to have my father's remains transferred to Moscow. Then I was beset by doubts as to the religious propriety. During a stop-over in San Francisco—I was still a Soviet musician and was on a tour abroad—I decided to call on Bishop John Shakhovskoy and ask his opinion.

"But why do you need to disturb your father's ashes?" he asked. "For your personal satisfaction? To be able to say, 'Look, what a good son am I!' How long do you suppose the house will last that is to be built over that graveyard? Well, let's say 500 years." (He obviously didn't want to reflect badly on Soviet buildings, so he added an extra zero. . . .) "But your father is already in *eternity*, beyond all temporal disquiet. . . ." I returned home at peace with myself.

Will the Soviet government ever be able to grasp this aspect of the question, and give up at last this incessant, diabolical skullduggery?

## Hygiene

Out of the staid familiar pile there slips
amazingly, like a cry of liberation,
a magazine called *Fitness*, with a piece
on "Sensual Massage, the New Foreplay".
I note, more patiently than usual, that
appointments are running late, and settle down
to learning from simple text and illustration
the five basic strokes and the choice of oils.
Two minutes for revision, then I'm called
to the delicate expertise of Miss Maloney.

I'm tilted back, obedient, relaxed, trusting—
off-duty archon subject to his slave.
No, please, not that!—let perilous fantasies
be rigorously suppressed. But oh, how sweetly,
how nearly, like the lover on Keats's urn,
she hovers at my mouth! I allow only
marginal vision of her glowing eyes,
her lips' tormenting ripeness, as she probes
and rasps and flicks with dainty discipline.

"Rinse please"—then it's over. I doff the bib,
put on my jacket, wish her a nice weekend,
and go with dignity. Now I step down stairs,
my tongue relishing surfaces and crannies
restored to freshness by a small quick pick.
I sign at Reception, leave by an arched portal,
and drink the air like a reader of *Country Life*.

*Richard Kell*

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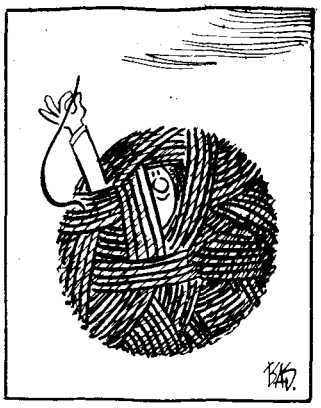
# PRESS

# The Foreign Correspondent in Moscow

## *On Manipulation & Self-Deception—By* DAVID SATTER



EVERY WEEK NOW, sometimes as often as four times a week, the members of the Moscow foreign press corps file into the amphitheatre of a modern stone building on Zubovsky Boulevard, fill the semi-circular rows of orange-backed seats, fasten their earphones, and wait dutifully while Gennady Gerasimov, the Foreign Ministry press spokesman, prepares to convey the day's official Soviet message to the world.

The scene, routine enough in a Western capital, represents a startling change from the situation which existed between 1976 and 1982 when I was a correspondent in Moscow. At that time, opportunities to question high-ranking Soviet officials were all but unheard of, and when I returned to Moscow recently, the press conferences seemed to symbolise an entirely new Soviet attitude toward the Western press.

In the past, the Soviet authorities had tried to control the flow of information by shunning Western journalists; but now Soviet officials are available for interviews up to the level of Minister or higher. If it once was pointless to call the Foreign Ministry with a question, today reporters are calling and getting answers (even on Saturdays when, before, no Soviet official would pick up the phone). In some cases, officials in the Foreign Ministry press department are even volunteering to help journalists set up interviews.

The change is said to reflect the new policy of *glasnost* ("publicity" rather than "openness") that the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachov, says he wants to use to expose defects in the Soviet system and whose benefits he is ostensibly extending to Western reporters. A closer look, however, shows that despite the appearance of change the Soviets have not abjured the goal of manipulating Western correspondents. With the help of *glasnost*, they have merely learned how to do it better.

DAVID SATTER, *who was for six years the Moscow correspondent of "The Financial Times" of London, is now living in Paris and writing a book about life in the Soviet Union.*

The new approach to Western reporters is to some extent a tribute to the Soviet authorities' growing sophistication. The great problem with the previous system was that although it limited the amount of damaging information about the Soviet Union in the Western press, it did nothing positive to disinform Western public opinion. The new policy is intended to remedy this lacuna. The goal is now not just to suppress relevant truthful information, but also to insinuate more Soviet propaganda into the Western media and influence the Western political process. The strategy is still young, but it is not too early to say that it is a success. The reason is simple. Many European and American journalists, startled to find that they now have access to Soviet officials, are showing a readiness to repeat uncritically whatever those officials say.

A striking example of the success of *glasnost* was given after an attack on Western reporters by the Russian police in Moscow on 12 February.

Demonstrations on behalf of Josef Begun, a Jewish dissident, were allowed to continue relatively unmolested for three days—long enough to convince Western Sovietologists that the Soviet Union was embarking on democratic reform, but not long enough to suggest to Soviet citizens that demonstrating in public might actually be possible.

On the fourth day, the Soviet police moved in and began beating both the Russian demonstrators and the Western correspondents, including Martin Walker, the correspondent of *The Guardian* (London).

In this situation, elementary common sense should have suggested that the three days of tolerance were intended to create the illusion of liberalisation, and that the true situation was reflected in the authorities' reaction on the fourth day. Mr Walker, however, relying on Soviet functionaries who, he said, "commiserated" with him, speculated that the demonstrators were attacked because dissident elements in the *KGB* had chosen to sabotage Mr Gorbachov's liberalisation programme. With a faith in his sources which was rather touching, Walker quoted a "passionate Gorbachov supporter" as saying, "There is a real effort to change the system here, to relax the controls, but these people [the demonstrators] . . . risk upsetting everything."

The coverage in *The Guardian* of the attack on the February demonstration was not an isolated case of the tendency to place undue trust in the statements of Soviet officials. There is no shortage of other examples.

In September 1985, *Time* Magazine interviewed Gorba-



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chov but, although this was the Soviet leader's first interview with an American publication, *Time* made no attempt to question him seriously. There were no queries about Afghanistan, the fate of Andrei Sakharov (then still in exile in Gorky), or about Soviet violations of arms control agreements. Perhaps more important, there was no attempt to challenge any of Gorbachov's statements, although when he said that the Soviet Union did not conduct anti-American campaigns, did not "thirst" for American technology, and was trying to break the "vicious circle" of the arms race, he was clearly not telling the truth.

On 26 February 1986 ABC Television invited Vladimir Posner, a commentator for Radio Moscow, to reply to President Reagan's televised speech on Defence spending. Although Posner used the opportunity, in effect, to call President Reagan a liar, ABC made no attempt to evaluate his veracity. David Brinkley, Posner's ABC host, not only did not contest the assertion that the Soviet Union is "not conducting anti-ballistic defence research", but also, in introducing Posner, asked for his "reactions" in a manner which suggested that a disciplined Party propagandist was in a position to offer an opinion of his own.

Soviet propaganda is designed to be plausible. For this reason, it is vitally important that Western correspondents learn not to take every statement by a Soviet official literally. It is now clear, however, that uncritical repetition by Western correspondents of the remarks of Soviet officials is likely to be a hallmark of the *glasnost* era.

THE SITUATION HAS REACHED the point where, in much Western reporting from the Soviet Union, what is described as an "interview" is not an attempt to learn the truth but merely a collection of the latest propaganda for subsequent retransmission.

Bob Zelnick, the former Moscow correspondent of ABC News, explained the mechanics of this type of "interview" when he described his meetings with "academics" in the U.S.A. Institute, a Soviet "think-tank" whose principal purpose is to disinform Western public opinion.

> "With some of these fellows [Zelnick told the *Washington Journalism Review*] I'll say, 'I need a 30-second sound-bite on why Reagan's foreign policy is not working' and they'll give it to me. But Professor Bogdanov [Radomir Bogdanov, the Institute's deputy director] won't go along with that. He's an academician, quite serious. So I'll have . . . to get what I want . . . by asking the same question several times in several different ways. Actually, I have him scripted: I want a bite on Reagan's hard-line foreign policy and a bite on the failure of Reagan's policy in Lebanon."

In most cases, there is nothing sinister about the failure to question Soviet officials seriously; it is simply a matter of bad reporting. None the less, there are disturbing signs that, in a few cases, news organisations—their appetites whetted by the possibility of exclusive interviews—are tempted to bargain for access to Soviet officials with political compliance.

In November 1985, for example, the American television networks competed openly for Soviet favour before the Reagan-Gorbachov summit meeting in the hope of getting an interview with Gorbachov. Network executives, according to the *Washington Post*, "wined and dined" Soviet officials and offered "carefully guarded blueprints" of how Gorbachov would look on "morning television, the evening news, or even in prime time". When the CBS anchorman Dan Rather asked Gorbachov a question about "political prisoners" at a press conference in Paris in October, during Gorbachov's visit to France, the *Post* said that CBS feared that he had ruined the network's chances for an exclusive interview. Instead of being impressed with Rather's integrity, Walt Rogers, the ABC Moscow correspondent, was quoted as saying afterward, "I watched [Rather] shoot himself in the foot."

SUCH ATTITUDES have apparently emboldened the Soviets to feel they have the bargaining power to pressure networks into changing their commercial programming. In December 1985, ABC postponed production of the $40 million mini-series *Amerika*, which had been produced by its entertainment division and described life in the United States following a Soviet takeover. The network had been warned by Soviet officials that its position in Moscow could be "jeopardised" if production of the mini-series went ahead. When it became known that ABC had bowed to Soviet pressure, there was a public outcry in the United States, and ABC decided after all to produce the mini-series, which has since been televised. What was astonishing was that ABC at first appeared ready to give in to the outrageous Soviet threat, and did not reject it out-of-hand.

The readiness of major American news agencies to serve as transmission-belts for Soviet official information is now widely taken for granted; but it is also dangerous because the Soviet Union is a country which, since its creation, has been characterised by a radical split between propaganda and reality. (The propaganda is intended to show that the Soviet régime is realising the utopian predictions of Marxist-Leninist ideology.)

In the light of this split, wider access for correspondents to official propaganda does not mean that the American and European public are going to be better-informed. The Soviet authorities are merely making it that much easier for unwary journalists to communicate a deluded view of reality.

Soviet propaganda, in its raw form, is not very credible to the West. It attains credibility when it is repeated uncritically in important European and American publications. With the added verisimilitude that only trusted Western publications can give, the Soviet Union's ideological lying and officially sanctioned misuse of language may, over time, begin to blur the all-important line between reality and delusion in world politics. Imposing a false view of reality with the help of the Western press is therefore a fundamental Soviet political priority.

The floodgates of disinformation have been opened wider

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in the Gorbachov era, but the tendency of some reporters to transmit propaganda uncritically is not new. *Glasnost* could not have enjoyed its present success had it not been built on an existing system of manipulation carefully designed to induce a correspondent to report official propaganda and to cripple his ability to gather information on his own.

THE KEY TO THE SYSTEM lies in defining the context in which Western reporters operate—and this means making certain that they are isolated from Soviet society. To this end, correspondents' lives are organised in such a way that their daily experiences are as divorced from the reality they are covering as the disinformation they are expected to transmit.

Western correspondents in Moscow live in walled-in apartment complexes and shop in hard-currency stores, all of which are off limits to ordinary Russians. Their apartments and telephones are bugged. They are watched by the armed guards stationed at the doors of their buildings, by their maids in their homes, and by their Soviet secretaries and drivers in their offices. All of these persons report on them to the *KGB*. They are frequently followed. Unless correspondents make a conscientious and difficult effort to seek out Soviet citizens independently, few will be ready to meet them—and most of those who do so, even if they are dissidents or *refuseniks*, will be implicitly acceptable to the Soviet authorities because they are unrepresentative of Soviet society as a whole.

If a correspondent does not try to make contacts on his own, he will not understand the life that is going on all around him, particularly if he is one of the majority of Western correspondents who do not speak Russian. The authorities will try to assure that reporting disinformation is the best way for cloistered correspondents to make their career.

In their manipulation of such correspondents the Soviet authorities rely on carrots-and-sticks. A wire-service reporter, for example, can be tipped off to a story five minutes before his competitors; a newspaper correspondent can be sure of having a Soviet official at dinner with his editor, thus demonstrating his "access". On-the-record interviews with high-ranking officials are achievable by well-disposed correspondents, regardless of the general policy, and the most cooperative correspondents can aspire to interview the Soviet leader.

Favouritism costs the Soviet authorities nothing, and means nothing to the Western reading public; but ability to "scoop" the opposition, even if only with disinformation, is

## *Gorbachov's Glitterati: "like flies to fly-paper"*

**THE LIST was fantastic in every sense of the word: Gregory Peck, Graham Greene, Norman Mailer, Fay Weldon, Yoko Ono, Pierre Cardin, John Ogdon, Peter Ustinov . . . and there were 800-odd more of them, celebrities of one sort or another, scientists, actors, musicians.**

**What brought them all running to Moscow to adorn Mr Gorbachov's "International Peace Forum"? It is true that many celebrities like nothing better than mingling with other celebrities, as if fearful that too much contact with nonentities will rub the gilding off the image. It is also true that many toilers by brain relish a break from their solitary pursuits and will snap up any invitation to congress or conference (although at this time of year, most prefer a more tropical venue). Many are what Arthur Koestler once called the "Call Girls" of the circuit. But the response to Mr Gorbachov's invitation was infinitely more eager, his guest list far more dazzling than any other political host could dream of.**

GRAHAM GREENE *clearly spoke for a majority of his fellow-delegates when he said "I want to help Gorbachov." Their presence was a gesture of solidarity with the Soviet leader. Even when KGB thugs started roughing up dissidents and Western reporters, the Call Girls appeared undismayed.*

> **"You have to ask yourself if these orders come from the top or from somewhere lower down [said Norman Mailer]. I think we are in for a time of contradictions, with repressions in one place, liberalisation in another, as that Soviet ruling class which has run the place for years shows its unhappiness with the Gorbachov reforms."**

*What a peculiar epoch this "time of contradictions" must be. Although General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR, Gorbachov is, it seems, not himself part of the ruling class, nor is he to be held responsible for any of the repressions which may occur, presumably in spite of him or without his knowledge.*

*This comforting notion of a hopelessly divided Kremlin is one of the oldest illusions in the book. Even Roosevelt and Churchill used to fall into the belief that Stalin was something of a liberal hamstrung by sinister individuals in the background.*

HOW MUCH MORE POTENT **were these delusions about Stalin's personal motives and intentions when combined with delusions about the nature of Communism itself. At those extraordinary Congresses of Writers in the 1930s, literary lions received tumultuous applause for saying things like "It is in a Communist society that each individual, the privacy of each individual, can most perfectly expand" (*André Gide*), or "Communism restores to the individual his fertility" (*André Malraux*).**

**For Western writers, the collapse of these illusions was merely embarrassing. For Soviet writers, the price was rather steeper. Ilya Ehrenburg, the great literary survivor of Stalin's purges reflected ruefully that of the 700 Soviet writers who had attended the first Writers' Congress in 1934, only about 50 had survived to see the second 20 years later.**

BUT IS IT NOT *unfair to make this sort of comparison? Should we not recognise that Gorbachov is not Stalin, and that the Soviet Union has changed greatly in 50 years, in many ways for the better? These celebrated pilgrims may be a little naive, but surely only a hard-bitten cynic would refuse to acknowledge the genuine signs of hope emerging from Russia as Gorbachov finds his feet?*

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an advantage that many newspapers value highly. At the same time, a reporter who, against all the odds, tries to gather genuine information faces certain dangers. He will be shut out by official sources. He may be accused of "hooliganism" or "espionage" or "homosexuality". He may have his tyres slashed or receive unnerving anonymous telephone calls. He may be poisoned, as was Robin Knight (of *US News & World Report*, during a trip to Tashkent in 1978); or, if he persists in gathering information independently, he may share the fate of Andrew Nagorski of *Newsweek* and George Krimsky of the Associated Press, who were expelled.

Many correspondents, almost without realising it, begin to play by the authorities' rules, competing for official sources, even beginning to identify with them, and becoming so absorbed in the recycling of Soviet propaganda that they lose sight of the fact that what they are reporting is not real.

"This country has a long history of taming and manipulating the West", said a Soviet acquaintance of mine, "but each reporter from the West arrives here fresh, unprepared to understand this peculiar society. The result is that he is often not able to recognise the real evil when he meets it."

Evidence of the success of the Soviet techniques of manipulation is not far to seek. It is evident in the contrast between the incisive Western reporting of real events from most capitals and the sterile repetition of official propaganda from the Soviet Union. In his recent book, *Reluctant Farewell*, Andrew Nagorski quotes an Associated Press correspondent as saying that 90% of the stories filed from Moscow by the AP in the early 1980s were simple paraphrases of articles from the Soviet press.[1]

Under Gorbachov, the tendency to report Soviet disinformation has, if anything, increased. Correspondents may now receive the propaganda from open press conferences and face-to-face interviews, but the content of what they are told is no different from what can be read in the official Soviet press.

THE PRODUCTS OF the Soviet disinformation machine can be divided into two distinct categories: the propaganda which is intended to provide the West with false impressions about the Soviet Union's basic motives, and that which is developed *ad hoc*, in response to specific East-West events.

[1] *Reluctant Farewell.* By ANDREW NAGORSKI. Owl Books/Henry Holt, $8.95.

*Kindly Westerners may be forgiven for wishing to give Mr Gorbachov the benefit of the doubt. But I wonder whether the motives of the itinerant glitterati are quite so noble as they themselves believe. Celebrities tend to be attracted not so much to the complex procedures and restraints of constitutional government as to the spectacle of raw, uninhibited power. Even such a sobersides as Goethe was infatuated with Napoleon, because he saw in him a man who could remake Europe from scratch. Graham Greene has enjoyed the friendship of dictators like Fidel Castro and Omar Torrijos of Panama. One suspects he would be less amused by the company of Britain's Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means or the Parliamentary Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Security.*

MEN OF LETTERS, **as Burke pointed out, are rarely adverse to innovation (and the same goes for couturiers and TV personalities). They tend to be impatient as children are; they lack a sense of difficulty; they want it now. Gorbachov attracts them as fly-paper attracts flies, not because he is a democrat, but because he is not.**

THERE IS, I THINK, *quite a difference between the influence which Soviet propaganda and its Western propagators exert now and that which they exerted in the 1930s. Then, the prime effect was to create a ludicrously rosy picture of Russia and so to handicap Western politicians in dealing robustly and realistically with the Kremlin.*

*The more sophisticated Soviet propagandists have twigged that there is less chance these days of spreading such illusions in the most absurd form (although the supply of suckers never quite dries up). The line now is not so much to present Russia as "a new dawn in human history" but rather to equate West and East as inhabiting the same grey twilight, both muddling through by trial-and-error in the general direction of peace and reform, but with the Soviet Union leading the way, due to its blessed lack of monopoly capitalists and warmongering cliques. And this equation is eagerly taken up by sympathisers and self-haters in the West.*

*The "paranoid", "sclerotic" behaviour of Western governments is compared unfavourably with the freshness and openness of Gorbachov's reforms, fiery American rhetoric with honeyed Soviet phrases. Gorbachov's campaign for* glasnost *and the agitation in Britain for reform of the Official Secrets Act are talked of in the same breath, as though there were little difference between the levels of secrecy in the two systems. Facile comparisons are made between Sellafield and Chernobyl, as if the death toll were evenly distributed between the two.*

NO ONE KNOWS **better how to egg on such mischievous perversity than Graham Greene, who is always telling us how much he would prefer to die in Russia rather than in California, when we all know that in fact this melancholy event is far more likely to occur in Antibes.**

**This false equation is the new treason of the clerks. What could be more intellectually dishonest than to glide over all the enduring and inherent vices of the Soviet system—the iron control of the Soviet Communist Party; the power of the KGB; the lack of freedom of speech or freedom of travel; the abysmal economic performance—and pretend that these are minor inconveniences in comparison with Gorbachov's love of peace and thirst for democracy?**

WHAT COULD BE *more fatuous than to imagine that such a monolithic tyranny could be shifted an inch by a gala of glamorous ninnies? We are more likely to learn the truth about Russia from those who are trying to leave it after half a lifetime than from those who have arrived there for a week.*

***Ferdinand Mount***
*in* THE DAILY TELEGRAPH (*London*)

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Perhaps the most conspicuous example of the first type of propaganda is attempts by Soviet officials to give the impression that the Soviet Union is "paranoid". Typically, someone—perhaps an "academic" at the U.S.A. Institute, like Bogdanov or the disarmament specialist Genrikh Trofimenko—will explain to correspondents why the Soviet Union feels it has something to fear. Using standard phrases and gestures, he begins by referring to an increase in American military spending and the ring of American bases around the Soviet-bloc perimeter. He mentions the danger posed by China. He speaks of the 20 million Soviet dead in the Second World War and the fear of another devastating invasion. He may then conclude—as Bogdanov did at one meeting I attended—by saying ". . . we need to talk to each other, to listen to each other. . . . We need the kind of relations in which we look into each other's eyes."

Such meetings generally inspire articles like the one entitled "Soviet Global Position Eroding" (*Washington Post*, 11 September 1980), which, quoting diplomatic sources, referred to renewed fear of "capitalist encirclement" in the Soviet Union and said that "Moscow sees itself surrounded . . . and left without friends on the vast Asian continent with the exception of India and Viet Nam." It was suggested that this feeling of "strategic vulnerability" lay behind the invasion of Afghanistan.

The idea that the Soviet Union feels threatened is assiduously propagated, and is very convenient for the Soviet leaders. If the Soviet Union fears attack, the enormous Soviet military build-up becomes defensive in character and there is even an explanation—based on supposed Soviet "paranoia"—for such overt aggression as the invasion of Afghanistan or the shooting down of the Korean airliner.

Of course, there is no shortage of indications that the Soviet Union is not paranoid, including the fact that the Soviet armed forces are trained for offence, not defence, and that Soviet citizens are told constantly that the victory of Communism is inevitable in every country in the world. But, in part because the West fears doing something to aggravate Soviet "paranoia", a major debate erupts in the West every time Nato takes some needed step to provide for its own defence.

Propaganda directed toward the West is also intended to frustrate specific Western policy initiatives. While I was in Moscow, one notable propaganda campaign was aimed at discouraging Western economic sanctions after the invasion of Afghanistan. In this case, the Soviets played a shell-game with words. They described the indigenous Islamic resistance as "outside interference", and then offered to withdraw their troops after the "outside interference" had come to an end.

To make this campaign work, the Soviets counted on the numbing effect of repetition. First, they said that the Soviet Union would consider withdrawing its troops even if the US did not end 100% of the "outside interference". Next, the Afghan puppet government of Babrak Karmal offered in April 1980 to open negotiations with Iran and Pakistan (which refused to recognise it), based on an end to "outside interference". Then, a month later, the two offers were combined and presented as a package—Soviet withdrawal in exchange for American, Iranian, and Pakistani agreement to an end to non-existent "outside interference".

Each of these "peace-feelers" received considerable publicity in the West and, what was more serious, the disinformation campaign was in the end a partial political success. By creating the vague impression of Soviet flexibility over Afghanistan, it allowed the Western Europeans to rationalise their failure to impose sanctions against the Soviet Union. Instead, the French and West German leaders held summit meetings with the Soviets in Warsaw and Moscow, and signed a 25-year economic cooperation agreement with them in July 1980, just seven months after the invasion took place.

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Among the best recent examples of a fully orchestrated disinformation campaign which depended heavily on uncritical reporting for its success was the one in which the Soviets tried to convince the world that President Reagan, who described the Soviet Union as an "evil empire", was pushing the world toward nuclear war.

Georgy Arbatov, director of the U.S.A. Institute and perhaps the Soviet Union's premier disinformation specialist, said in an interview with the *Washington Post* (10 April 1982):

> "We have entered a very dangerous period. Everything looks sinister. In this atmosphere which is becoming denser and denser, any spark could lead to a crisis."

Bogdanov (his deputy) told ABC:

> "The smell of nuclear war is very, very strong in the air."

These themes were reiterated by the Soviet leaders. In a speech of 27 October 1982, Leonid Brezhnev accused the Reagan Administration of "adventurism", and eleven days later warned that Soviet military power could "cool . . . the hot heads of some imperialist politicians".

Hundreds of stories appeared in American newspapers and elsewhere which spoke of a "tremendous deterioration" in US-Soviet relations. Murrey Marder, of the *Washington Post*, wrote in a news-analysis (16 October 1983):

> "With each side feeling deeply aggrieved by the other, the risks of misjudging what might escalate from a regional crisis to an international flare up have sharply increased."

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And Philip Geyelin, a columnist for the *Post* (9 November 1982):

> "If Ronald Reagan can't bend—if he can't bring himself to abandon the chest thumping and jungle yells of his 'Me Tarzan' approach to the Soviets—you can be pretty certain that Leonid Brezhnev . . . is not going to risk rejection . . . by making the first move."

And Anthony Lewis, the *New York Times* columnist, quoted a Soviet "acquaintance" (probably a Soviet official) as saying:

> "I pray that before Reagan's term is up, we are not in conflict somewhere in the world."

With well-known journalists mechanically repeating Soviet propaganda, the idea that Reagan had increased the danger of war began to seep into the consciousness of the West. In fact, there was probably never any "crisis" in relations, in the sense that something fundamental had undergone a change. The Soviet Union remained expansionist and militaristic, just as it was when US-Soviet relations were "good" and the USSR invaded Afghanistan.

But the Soviet campaign was a partial success. There was no reduction in the US Defence Budget, but by early 1984 basic moral criticism of the Soviet system by the United States had ceased. The Soviets, who reject Judaeo-Christian values (and claim to have a "higher" morality), actually fear such criticism greatly. Meanwhile, the Soviet ideological attack on Western democratic countries continued unabated.

WITH THE APPEARANCE OF a new Soviet leader, the need for penetrating reporting from Moscow is greater than ever, but—in the vain hope of developing "sources" of information among Soviet officials—correspondents have become more regimented than at any time in the last ten years.

At the centre on Zubovsky Boulevard, press conferences are held constantly. Invariably, they are announced on the day they are held, with no preliminary information about the topic except that it is "a matter of international importance". Fear of competition inspires almost every correspondent to attend almost every conference; and once a correspondent has devoted his afternoon to attending such a meeting, he feels obliged to write about it, whether it is important or not. There is little appreciation that, in some cases, it would be more professional *not* to write—or that one correspondent could attend the press conference instead of thirty, freeing the others to do useful work.

One Western journalist in Moscow told me that, in the last three years, he did not know of a single case of an American correspondent travelling unsupervised to a typical Soviet city. "There is a very low opinion of Russians", said the journalist, who expressed misgivings about the quality of Western coverage. "There was a time when many of the correspondents thought the country was ruled by 'thugs' who 'sucked the blood of the people', and felt that we should take the side of the people. But now what you hear is that the Russians have the régime they deserve, and that the Soviet system is only an extension of the people. . . ."

A negative attitude toward ordinary people is an excuse for passivity. The situation has gone so far that some correspondents even adopt the Soviet régime's mentality. In *Reluctant Farewell*, Andrew Nagorski quoted the Moscow correspondent for a major American newspaper as saying, "If you look at the situation logically . . . anyone who becomes a dissident in this society must be a little bit crazy." He then complained to Nagorski, "I keep getting calls from these crazy people."

The readiness of Western correspondents to accept the limits which the authorities impose on them has not gone unnoticed by Soviet citizens. "The problem", said a young Soviet painter, "is that many of the correspondents don't understand and don't want to understand this country."

> "It is too complex to be covered by someone who doesn't speak the language and who doesn't have a wide culture which allows him to see this country in the context of world history. What the correspondents write is broadcast back here in Russian by the foreign radio so their role is enormous, but inevitably their reporting shows that they relate to their responsibilities formally and egoistically."

AS WE ENTER what some say will be a new period of "liberalisation", we need to review not only our knowledge but also the sources of our knowledge. Reporting from the Soviet Union requires special preparation and an unusual commitment. Because many Western correspondents lack that skill and commitment, the Soviet authorities have been able to influence the stream of reporting on which we base our impressions of the Soviet Union.

The sad fact is that behind the façade of a country which desires nothing so much as "peace" and "good relations" is an aggressive police state waiting to be discovered. Before making policy-decisions based on our impressions, it is important to remember that a great apparatus in the Soviet system is organised to create illusions. It is time to begin to give serious thought to the whole process through which these impressions are formed.

## Now

This is the bankrupt hour,
when the mind begins to weigh
a crowded past against an unused future,
and disallows the possibility of now.

When drawn and puckered curtains
seem a fencing in, and silence
not a positive denial of sound
but a quicksand for the mind to wander in.

It is the cat who leaves no joy unspent,
uncurls herself from sleep
to rub her tongue along her fur,
then overturns with waving paws
to pluck a moment from the air.

*Heather Buck*

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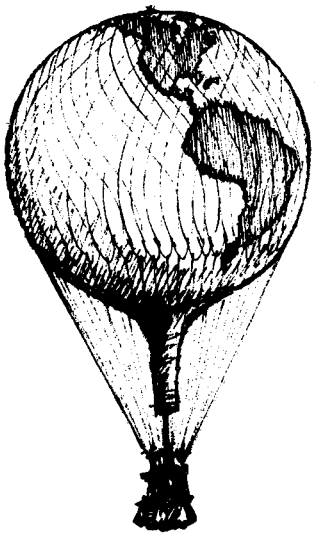
# CONTROVERSY

# The Arms Race & Mr Gorbachov

## *Western Dilemmas—By* RICHARD PERLE



LET ME SAY at the outset that these reflections on the evolution of the Alliance, unshrouded by the diplomatic mist of an official statement, are mine alone. For whatever the virtues of diplomacy in our public discourse, clarity is not among them; and yet it is clarity above all that our Western Alliance most urgently needs.

Unlike our adversaries to the East the Atlantic Alliance has no party-line. Its members are free to dissent from majority views, and they do so frequently. At the same time they are deeply involved in the shaping of those views which are regularly expressed, in convoluted and often lengthy communiqués, at the conclusion of each Alliance Ministerial meeting. Often these communiqués are the product of a sleepless night during which the bureaucrats of fifteen or sixteen nations have wrestled the English and French languages to the ground in order to paper over differences, avoid controversy, placate public opinion, and round all corners and smooth all sharp edges as though we were designing a Stealth airplane rather than declaring our most fundamental convictions. No wonder no one reads these official pronouncements except those who draft them and, from time to time, an Opposition party looking for a quarrel with its own government.

At one recent Ministerial meeting the United States proposed saying that Mr Gorbachov would destroy the credibility of the Soviet leadership if, after having agreed *not* to do so, he persisted in holding an agreement on intermediate missiles hostage to one on Strategic Defence. The experienced Ambassador of an important Alliance nation, speaking, presumably, for his government (or, more likely, reflecting what he thought his Minister would think if he knew what was going on in Brussels at that moment), vigorously opposed so unambiguous a formulation.

"You can't say that", he said. "Why not?" I asked. "It just isn't done", he replied. "You don't say in a NATO communiqué that Gorbachov has lied."

So we took a brush to that sentence and painted it pallid, sacrificing clarity to consensus as we have done countless times in recent years. And then we wonder why the public is confused about defence and security issues—and even, if some European opinion polls are to be believed, about whether the President of the United States or the General-Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is the more "sincere" in the pursuit of arms control.

How can we possibly be convincing when we cower behind bland and oblique formulations so as not to offend the sensitivities of our enemies or the prevailing wisdom of our editorial writers? Add to the *sotto voce* murmurings that pass for Alliance statements the tendency to embrace every fashionable idea, no matter how ill-founded, and you have a recipe for diplomatic drift and political disaster. It is pointless to

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RICHARD PERLE *has been Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Reagan Administration for the past six years. Possibly one of the most "demonised" Americans in recent times, he was Special Adviser in the 1970s to the influential Democratic Senator from Washington, the late Henry "Scoop" Jackson. His article is based on controversial remarks he made recently in Munich to a West German conference on military affairs.*

*Shortly thereafter he announced his resignation—another occasion for further "demonisation". "The Times" (London), in obligatory deference to the cliché, reported that he was "nicknamed 'The Prince of Darkness'". The "Daily Telegraph" headline was "DOCTOR DOOM QUITS THE PENTAGON" and, likewise, the "Guardian" headline read: "'PRINCE OF DARKNESS' QUITS . . ."—although the nicknamers were none other than the fanciful headline-writers themselves. In what passes for straight news these days, he had become (the Washington dispatches continued) "notorious" for his critical, "obstructive views". Moreover:*

> *. . . "many arms control advocates ascribe a large measure of blame to Mr Perle for lack of progress on superpower agreement since President Reagan took office."*

*No newspaper, in its search for a bit of impartial balance, would record that "Many, on the other hand, ascribed a large measure of credit to him for preventing Presidential naivety and ignorance from blundering from one-sided, deceptive, and injurious deals with Moscow, over the heads of the Europeans whom he criticised for not knowing their own best interests. . . ." Now read on.*

***M.J.L.***



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complain of the inroads of Soviet propaganda while joining in the charade that permits it to succeed. There is, in all of this, an unconsciously patronising quality to the way we choose, both as an Alliance and, often, as leaders of member governments, to communicate with our people. It is wrong to believe that they must be protected by officials wiser than themselves from knowledge of the source and nature of the danger that threatens their security and our democratic institutions. They possess the strength and resilience to face unpleasant truths if only these are laid before them.

On such complex subjects as military strategy or Defence spending, chemical weapons or nuclear testing, Arms Control or Soviet treaty violations or international Terrorism, a failure of forthrightness or just plain silence—particularly among the European members of the Alliance—often has led to confusion and wishful thinking of alarming proportions. In such a climate reality is subordinated to hope, and policy is shaped by fear.

Consider the notion that an agreement to "abolish nuclear weapons" would enhance our security and diminish the threat of a nuclear war. This idea was artfully and disingenuously cultivated by Mr Gorbachov in his January 1986 proposal to eliminate all nuclear weapons by the year 2000. It is dangerous nonsense, calculated to undermine the legitimacy of weapons that are vital to Western security—and to whose total numbers the Soviets have been adding steadily for the past two decades.

For a quarter-century the Alliance has relied on nuclear weapons to offset a massive Soviet superiority of conventional forces. And even as Soviet "theatre nuclear forces" have grown to exceed those of the Western Allies we have sought to confront the Warsaw Pact with the threat of escalation, however unlikely, to deter aggression. Exhortations to diminish our dependence on nuclear weapons by "strengthening our conventional defences" have been unavailing. And despite the abhorrence of nuclear weapons routinely expressed by those least prepared to pay for conventional ones, we remain, as an Alliance, unwilling to invest in a more favourable conventional balance with the Warsaw Pact.

To talk, in these circumstances, of the abandonment of nuclear weapons and the substitution of a conventional deterrent is absurd. Indeed, the very concept of "deterring the Soviet Union" with conventional weapons—however much they might be improved, however many divisions we might raise and equip (even with advanced conventional munitions)—is hopelessly unrealistic. For while conventional *Defence* is both possible and desirable (and expensive), conventional *Deterrence* is a dangerous illusion. Even if NATO mounted a superior conventional force it could not deter the Soviet Union with its vast nuclear arsenal. And as for the Soviets agreeing to "eliminate nuclear weapons", what Western leader would turn in his country's last remaining nuclear weapon on the strength of assurances—mere words—that the Soviets had done the same? The simple truth is that the verification of an agreement to abolish all nuclear weapons is not difficult, or very difficult: it is *impossible*, and Mr Gorbachov knows it. Indeed, he counts on it. It enables him to propose "eliminating all nuclear weapons" with the full confidence that the West cannot agree. And he has the added insurance that if we were so foolish as to do so the Soviet Union, which would surely cheat, would wind up with a monopoly of nuclear weapons and the realisation of the Leninist dream of a "decisive correlation of forces". For this reason alone it is idle to speak of "conventional deterrence" or "a nuclear-free world".

THE FOOLISHNESS of a nuclear-free world is in no way mitigated by the "conditions" that Western statesmen routinely attach to its achievement in order to avoid dismissing the idea as the empty propaganda that it is. To argue that "eliminating all nuclear weapons" is a good idea but the year 2000 is too soon; or to suggest that it must proceed by steps or stages; or that it must await a more favourable conventional balance or the settlement of regional disputes is self-defeating obfuscation. These arguments—rationalisations, really—are deployed by officials and politicians who fear that the public would not support them if they simply rejected outright Mr Gorbachov's beguiling manoeuvre.

This, I believe, is profoundly mistaken. Our people are more realistic than many politicians and most Foreign Offices think. They will work their way through an issue like this one, and they will get it right. But they will get it right sooner and with greater confidence if their leaders earn their pay and begin to lead. There is a reason why French public opinion has been consistently more realistic about these matters than opinion elsewhere in Europe, and it surely lies in the greater candour of a succession of French leaders, and a sometimes admirable French capacity to hold fast in the face of pressure from outside.

THE SOVIET CALL for "an end to all nuclear testing", and the moratorium with which it has sought to pressure the United States along these lines, presents similar issues for the Alliance. As long as the United States depends on nuclear weapons for its own defence, and that of its Allies, it will be necessary to test nuclear weapons. Without testing we would lose confidence in the weapons in our inventory; we would lose the capacity to correct failures and validate the corrections; and we would bring to a halt a critical element in the process by which we have been *reducing* the number and yield of nuclear weapons while making the residual stockpile *safer*, more secure, and more survivable. The conduct of nuclear tests over the last 25 years has been vital to the development of weapons that are, in turn, vital to the credibility and effectiveness of the American nuclear deterrent and NATO strategy. The idea that it would be a good thing to halt the testing of nuclear weapons is based on the belief that the development of new nuclear weapons is a bad thing, and that the inevitable decline in confidence in nuclear weapons that cannot be tested would somehow make their use less likely. Neither belief holds up under analysis.

The development of new nuclear weapons—most often as a replacement for older weapons that are less reliable, less safe, and less effective—has made deterrence more robust and the nuclear threshold higher than it would have been had

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we retained older weapons in the inventory. Replacement weapons are less vulnerable to direct attack by the Warsaw Pact or to misappropriation by terrorists. Their yield is more predictable and, for the most part, much lower than the weapons they have replaced. The confidence we have in them, far from making nuclear war "more likely", has enabled us to *reduce* the size of our stockpile; and greater confidence has, by strengthening deterrence, meant a more stable military relationship with the Warsaw Pact.

All of this has been known for some time to the leadership of the Alliance. Nevertheless, a number of Allied leaders have urged the United States to abandon nuclear testing, or restrict it sharply. And a number of American officials, who are persuaded of the need to test nuclear weapons, have sought over the years to avoid saying so by declaring an end to testing "a long-term goal" and by pointing to the inability to verify a comprehensive test ban as the central argument against it. The current American administration is the first to express in public a view that previous administrations have held in private: that a comprehensive test ban would be dangerous and undesirable even if it were verifiable—which it is not.

Thus the West, by hiding behind "verification", and by its silence in public about the necessity to test, has helped to set the stage for Mr Gorbachov's "moratorium". And by declaring that a comprehensive test ban is "a long-term goal" we have obscured the necessity for and the benefits of nuclear testing. Those who know better have joined with those who do not.

In this intellectual climate the Kremlin has found it easy to make us an offer that we must refuse; and we, in turn, have made that refusal more costly and less intelligible than is warranted or wise.

In Europe especially, but in America as well, the capacity to face reality has been even less evident with respect to chemical weapons than nuclear ones. Thus the preoccupation with a chemical weapons ban has all but obliterated the central fact about chemical weapons: the Soviets possess them in quantity, train in their use, study their employment at specialised military academies, and equip themselves to fight in their midst with a seriousness wholly lacking among Western armies.

Most NATO Allies have no chemical weapons at all; and the United States, which does, has not produced a new or modernised chemical weapon in 18 years. The American programme for the production of new binary chemical weapons has proceeded with glacial speed as the US Congress, encouraged by an understandable transatlantic abhorrence of chemical warfare, has repeatedly delayed the programme in the vain hope that an Arms Control Agreement will obviate the clear Alliance requirement for a chemical weapon deterrent. When the American programme did finally get under way, the Allies, dragged into the American decision by a Congressional tactic aimed at aborting it, managed only a furtive, inaudible nod in the direction of simple prudence.

Driven by the belief that nothing can go forward that is not the subject of negotiations with the East, the United States has put forward a proposal for the abolition of chemical weapons in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. It provides, among other things, for a verification provision that would permit immediate, mandatory, on-site inspection in circumstances where there is reason to suspect a violation of the Treaty's main provision banning the possession of chemical weapons.

From the moment the United States made its proposals the concern of the participating states, pressed forward by the Soviet Union, has been to advance toward agreement by weakening the effectiveness of the inspection scheme which the Soviets strenuously oppose. Even our British Allies have urged an inspection scheme that is rather more to the Soviets' liking precisely because it would virtually guarantee that no timely inspection could be carried out against the wishes of the suspect state.

All of this has been taking place against the background of new techniques for the manufacture of lethal chemicals that would render a treaty banning chemical weapons stocks and production facilities largely irrelevant to the question of whether a party to a weapons ban might nevertheless be poised to initiate chemical warfare. The unhappy fact is that ordinary chemical plants could be converted for the production of lethal agents in a matter of weeks, if plans were laid and preparations made in advance. Thus, the practical benefits of a chemical weapons ban would be largely vitiated by an inconvenient technical fact that we have been reluctant even to acknowledge, much less comprehend in our policies. And like so much else in this area of arms control, the burden of treaty obligations falls far more heavily on the open democratic societies of the West than the closed totalitarian states of the East. No member of this Alliance could, in the aftermath of an agreement banning chemical weapons, take steps to plan and prepare for their manufacture. In the East, by constrast, such activities could, and almost certainly would, proceed in impenetrable secrecy.

It is, therefore, fair—and even urgent—to ask whether the scourge of chemical warfare is best prevented by establishing an ability to respond in kind if attacked with chemical weapons or by an international agreement banning chemical weapons (if one can be formulated) that is unverifiable and unenforceable, as it must inevitably be. Thus the Alliance is faced with a hard question and an easy answer. And while it pains me to say it, I fear that the hard question will remain unanswered and the easy answer unquestioned.

For more than three years the American Administration has been reporting to the Congress and to our Allies on the continuing pattern of Soviet violations of a number of Arms Control agreements. We have documented these violations in detail in briefings to Allied officials, most recently at a meeting of Allied Ministers of Defence.

I will not repeat here the details of the Soviet violations. The radar at Krasnoyarsk, the deployment of a second new

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type of ICBM, the encryption of telemetry necessary to establish compliance—all these are well known.[1]

The Alliance has, from time to time, had something to say on the subject, and various leaders of the Alliance have found occasion to comment as spokesmen for their governments. Yet in all the pronouncements with which I am familiar I cannot recall seeing the word *violation*. There have been *concerns* and even *serious concerns* expressed at the Soviet record of compliance. There have been appeals pointing to the importance of compliance, and warnings about a double standard of compliance; but nowhere have I been able to find a statement deploring the fact that the Soviets have been cheating. It is as though the words *violation* and *cheating* cannot be spoken in well-mannered company. How hard our Allies find it to distinguish between the unspeakable and the unspoken. How easy it is to become like parents who, wishing to avoid the pain and inconvenience of disciplining their children, will pretend not to have noticed their misdeeds.

In response to Soviet violations, President Reagan felt it necessary to decide that the United States would no longer consider itself bound to comply with the provisions of the SALT I interim agreement and the SALT II Treaty, a treaty that was never ratified and that would have expired more than a year ago had it been approved in the United States Senate.

President Reagan's misgivings about the SALT II Treaty, which were shared by the Senate Armed Services Committee in 1979 (when it found that ratification of the treaty was not in the national security interests of the United States), were well known. Nevertheless, the President's action was taken reluctantly, and only after repeated attempts to persuade the Soviets to end their violations and comply. And it followed more than five years of compliance by the Administration which early in 1981 had pledged to refrain from any action that would undercut SALT II so long as the Soviets showed similar restraint.

IN CONTRAST TO the halting euphemisms with which our Allies questioned Soviet compliance with SALT II, their desire that the United States continue unilaterally to comply found clear expression at Ministerial meetings and in many bilateral consultations. Allied governments have found it easier to distance themselves from the American response to Soviet violations than from the violations themselves. The double standard, condemned in NATO communiqués, has been urged upon us. And because so little was said about Soviet cheating, the American response to it was made to appear capricious and unfounded. Thus, the price of silence in 1983 became incomprehension in 1987. I believe the lesson is as clear as it is unlearned: if we fail to frame the debate within which the Alliance considers issues of security and arms control, if we shade reality in the belief that its glare is too harsh for our people to comprehend, we will leave it to be shaped by our adversaries for their purposes and in their image.

[1] See the document "'Dear Mr President': A Confidential Memorandum in Washington", ENCOUNTER, May 1986.

OF THE MANY EVENTS that have impressed themselves on the consciousness of the Alliance—the Reagan succession to the Carter Administration and its reassertion of American confidence in international affairs; the continuing Soviet aggression in Afghanistan; the implementation of the 1979 decision to deploy Cruise and *Pershing II* missiles in Europe; Soviet intimidation of Poland; the resumption of US-Soviet arms control negotiations and the Soviet walk-out in 1983; the Strategic Defence Initiative—none has had an effect as immediate and profound as the meeting between President Reagan and General-Secretary Gorbachov in Iceland last November. It was an occasion, unlike the Summits of the past, at which an unstructured and far-reaching discussion between the American and Soviet leaders took place against the background of the impasse that had developed in the Geneva negotiations.

I believe that the Reykjavik Summit has changed, perhaps permanently, the spectrum of Arms Control along which the positions of the United States and the Soviet Union are arrayed. No longer will treaties like SALT I and II, which allowed for substantial increases in nuclear forces, be regarded as meaningful and effective expressions of the interest we all share in Arms Control. The President has gone a long way toward achieving his objective of a new and far more demanding standard by which Arms Control should be judged: deep reductions in strategic forces that result in greatly diminished "equal weapons-ceilings". No longer will this or any other American administration gain easy approval for agreements that ratify and legitimise the growth of nuclear arsenals.

It is true that the discussions at Reykjavik did not reach a conclusion; but much was accomplished there. Partial agreement was reached on deep reductions of offensive forces, including a 50% reduction in strategic weapons and the near-elimination of intermediate missiles; and the President demonstrated considerable flexibility in attempting to conclude an agreement respecting strategic defences.

Much of the commentary that followed the meeting at Reykjavik has attributed the failure to conclude an agreement to the President's determination to protect the Strategic Defence Initiative, a determination that he reiterated in his State of the Union speech to the Congress. While it is true that the President was not prepared to conclude an agreement

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that would have forced the cancellation of this vital programme of research, it is quite wrong to believe that Strategic Defence was the only issue that could not be resolved in Iceland. At least as important (and in some respects even more important) was the President's refusal to accept a Soviet demand to eliminate all "strategic arms"—a proposal that would have forced the abandonment of America's nuclear deterrent and left our NATO allies vulnerable to a Soviet near-monopoly of nuclear weapons deliverable against the whole of Europe. Even now, in Geneva, Mr Gorbachov continues to insist that we agree to eliminate all nuclear forces capable of reaching Soviet or American territory. Such an agreement would force us to dismantle our strategic forces and our dual-capability aircraft in Europe and at sea. American conventional air forces would be abolished with the stroke of a pen while Soviet medium-range aircraft would remain, poised to strike NATO territory with nuclear as well as conventional weapons. This we could not accept.

President Reagan did propose that, in the context of accepting a Soviet proposal to refrain from the deployment of strategic defences for ten years, both sides should eliminate all offensive ballistic missiles of all ranges. Mr Gorbachov rejected this proposal, insisting instead that we go beyond the elimination of ballistic missiles and scrap the bombers and Cruise missiles that would constitute our remaining deterrent force.

Unlike "the elimination of all strategic arms"—which would create an intolerably adverse and unstable strategic balance—the phased elimination of ballistic missiles would diminish greatly the destabilising shadow cast by that category of weapons uniquely capable of a first offensive strike. Vital NATO installations in Europe, essential to deterrence, would no longer lie a half-dozen minutes (or less) from destruction by Soviet short- and medium-range missiles. America's deterrent forces, reconfigured to consist of aircraft and air- and sea-launched Cruise missiles, would be vastly more survivable. The near-continuous modernisation of missile forces, carried on by both sides at enormous expense, would cease. And the threat that the Soviets insist would result from the deployment of strategic defences would vanish as the missiles that defences are competent to intercept disappeared from both sides' arsenals.

With the elimination of ballistic missiles, a modest SDI would serve as essential insurance against cheating or an attack launched by a third power against the United States or its Allies. And in an effort to dissipate the apprehensions the Soviets claim to feel at the prospect of strategic defences, the President was prepared to agree that they would be deployed only after ballistic missiles had been eliminated.

LIKE ALL NEW IDEAS that challenge well-established beliefs, the idea of eliminating ballistic missiles has been greeted with considerable scepticism, especially in the Alliance. This is neither surprising nor disappointing. Indeed, too ready acceptance of ideas about Arms Control would be far more worrisome than the cautious reserve that ultimately produces more careful and considered judgment. It is now a task of the Alliance to render that judgment as Reykjavik is recollected in tranquillity.

I believe that the Soviet strategy at Reykjavik was to put forth the prospect of radical reductions in Strategic and Intermediate forces in the expectation that the President would either abandon SDI or incur the wrath of an angry Alliance and a disappointed Congress. In either case the aim was to throttle SDI in its infancy, in Iceland or thereafter. That strategy, based as it was on a massive miscalculation, has clearly failed. Far from rising up to demand an end to SDI in order to clear the way for the elimination of medium-range missiles in Europe, our European allies have begun, in private at least, to express once unspoken misgivings about the abandonment of the *Pershing* and Cruise missiles that were so recently the object of hostile demonstrations throughout Europe. And at home the Congress has given broad support to carrying on with the SDI programme—encouraged, no doubt, by quite remarkable polls showing massive support for SDI even (according to nearly 70% of one poll's respondents) if its continuation would preclude an agreement limiting offensive weapons.

SO THE SOVIETS ARE LEFT without a strategy after Iceland. And they now face the daunting prospect that a continued impasse in Geneva will delay until well into the next American administration any hope of a comprehensive arms agreement. In these circumstances Mr Gorbachov would do well to consider a more flexible position with respect to "strategic defences". Thus, the meeting at Reykjavik may well yet prove to have been the crucial turning-point in the search for an agreement limiting strategic forces.

But whatever its eventual consequences, Reykjavik has already elicited from our European allies a new and more sober regard for the difficulty of negotiating arms control arrangements that enhance Western security. For this result alone it was a weekend well spent. Looking back on the seemingly endless consultations across the Atlantic on Arms Control these last half-dozen years, I am reminded of Mark Twain's observation:

> "To do good work is noble. To urge others to do good work is even more noble—and it isn't very hard."

That we and our Allies now share a deeper appreciation of just how hard it is to fashion fair and equitable and militarily significant agreements, and to find the patience, will, and resolve not to settle for less, may prove to be Iceland's great contribution to our common defence and the strength and cohesion of the Alliance.

In this Alliance of proud and independent and sovereign democracies our most formidable challenge is to shape the desire of our people for peace and freedom into policies that protect both, and to do so with the confidence of our convictions and the candour to share them. This will demand clarity of thought and action when misty blandishments seem safer. It will take the courage to lead when the easier course is to follow. But above all it requires that we honour our freedom by giving our people the truth with which to defend it.

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# LANGUAGE

# From Rape to Rapture

## *The Ups & Downs of Words*—By D. J. ENRIGHT

LIKE US, words are subject to the wheel of fortune. As it turns, some have gone from rags to riches, but rather more (it would seem) have travelled in the opposite direction. To begin with, *coition* referred to the conjunction or going together of the planets: from what height fallen now! (Down to coming together.) *Bully*—from Middle Dutch "lover", perhaps cognate with "brother"—at first meant "sweetheart" or "fine fellow", but slipped, via "pimp", to its present unpleasantness, although traces of its origin linger on in "Bully for you!"

There's no word good or bad, but usage makes it so: this is the message of Adrian Room's instructive and entertaining book.[1] The intriguing question is how new usages come into being, and what lurks in the shadows behind them. *Boy* has ascended in the world from Latin "fettered person" (cf. "buoy") via "male servant" (a usage long current in the East, though in modern Japan *boi* is redeemed by the addition of *san*). On its way up the word crossed with *knave*, itself on the way down, degenerating from "boy" (cf. German *Knabe*), to "male servant", to "worthless fellow" (Room adduces the playing card, a servant, a common jack-of-all-trades), to its present sense. *Ace* (from Latin "unit") has risen from the throw in dice of one, the lowest possible, to the most valuable playing card, and thence to its metaphorical application in "ace pilot" and so forth. Yet "within an ace of death" is as short a span as can be imagined, and the word's ambiguity is reflected in the declaration "aces high" or "aces low".

*Lady* has wandered far and wide since its birth as (Old English) "loaf kneader", whereas *wench*, from its innocent beginnings as "child" (OE *wencel*, related to a word meaning "weak"), slumped badly to "prostitute", having acquired what Room calls its "wanton" overtone in the 14th century, around the time it came to be used for "maidservant". Now, he says, its overtone is "naughty"—though I would rather have said jocular, as also in the case of *hussy*, from "housewife" and once, by implication, signifying "thrifty". Room's account of *hussy*'s current meaning—"disreputable or immoral woman"—seems unduly harsh. Like *wench*, but unlike *promiscuous* ("of indiscriminate composition, of mixed kinds"), this is an example of the class of words which fell in moral import and then—perhaps because moral standards had themselves declined—climbed back somewhat.

Mind you, the same reason could equally well be advanced for the upward motion of *luxurious* (ex-"lascivious"), and of *jilt*, defined by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* as nothing worse than "Person (esp. woman) who capriciously casts off lover after encouraging him", though originally, in the 17th century, it signified "harlot". Similarly and (we are told) by a very rapid transition late in the same century, *rapture* was exalted—what male chauvinism lay behind this?—from "carrying off by force" and "rape" into "ecstatic delight". A word that has risen in another way is *quilt*, formerly and in accordance with its derivation from Latin *culcita*, a mattress, and hence underneath instead of on top.

A peculiarly sad decline was suffered by *jargon*, from Old French and possibly onomatopoeic, originally meaning the twittering of birds, as illustrated nicely here by quotations from Chaucer and Longfellow. Since, alas, we couldn't understand the avian language the word soon came to signify "meaningless talk", and subsequently the specialised discourse which may (for all we know) possess meaning but lacks the aesthetic appeal of birdsong. A similar fate befell *silly*, once denoting "blessed" and "holy" (cf. German *selig*, "holy", and *Seele*, "soul"), and also "innocent" and therefore—this must be how the rot set in—"helpless". Likewise *daft*, which at first betokened "meek" or "mild", and derived (the *COD* tells us) from a Germanic word for "suitable", from which by a parallel process we also took "deft".

POSSIBLY THE MOST grievous intellectual deterioration was that endured by *trivial*, originally relating to medieval university courses in grammar, rhetoric, and logic: i.e. *trivium*, literally "place where three roads meet", and giving the sense of "common, everyday" in that these liberal arts were held to be the ones spoken of in the streets. (Cf. *quadrivium*, the higher division of the liberal arts, comprising arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music: four roads meeting, but presumably in a less popular part of town, perhaps on the campus.) Room cites Shakespeare's *Henry VI*,

[1] *Dictionary of Changes in Meaning*. By ADRIAN ROOM. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £14.95.



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Part 2 (c. 1590) where the word occurs in its modern sense of "trifling": "And yet we have but trivial argument . . . that shows him worthy death", and also lines from Keble's hymn of 1827, "New every morning", which demonstrate the older, neutral sense of "everyday":

> *The trivial round, the common task,*
> *Will furnish all we need to ask.*

The latter passage shows how easy it is for a word to slither.

Except for those who (as Room observes) have latterly and happily embraced the designation, *punk* has always been pejorative, albeit varied in significance, comprehending "prostitute", "rotten wood", or "touchwood", "rubbish", "catamite", "worthless person or thing", "young hoodlum", and "novice" (more particularly in show or circus business). The origin of the word remains unknown, though some authorities refer halfheartedly to "spunk", also of unkn. orig. but primarily meaning "touchwood" and hence coinciding with one of *punk*'s senses. In his *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* Eric Partridge lists *punk* as cyclist's slang for a punctured tyre, but this is late 19th-century and obsolescent if not obsolete.

CHANGES IN MEANING have diverse causes, some of which must remain a mystery to us. Others are readily understood. Obeying its etymology, *target* signified a light shield. Since a shield was intended to protect what would be aimed at, the word came by simple transference to acquire its present meaning. Allied is the sort of poetic borrowing (rather than change in meaning) exemplified by the use in printing of "widow" to indicate a word or short line ending a paragraph at the top of a page—like some old turtle, as Paulina says in *The Winter's Tale*, lamenting her lost mate, and best avoided. (Change in place names is outside Room's brief, but Fritz Spiegl in *The Joy of Words*[2] mentions that New York was earlier New Amsterdam, and earlier still bore the Indian name Manhattan, and that Berlin, Alabama was restyled as Sardis during World War II, though there are still places in the States called Sodom.)

When something new comes along, for example a preventive against smallpox, an old word may be recruited: in this case, *inoculate*, earlier a botanical term denoting "engraft", since the disease is being engrafted or implanted. (Latin *oculus* is "bud" as well as "eye".) As we have noted, elsewhere pejoration or amelioration sets in as a result of associations, whether just or unjust. *Meticulous* comes from the Latin for "fearful": eventually, one might surmise, it was perceived that fearful people are often very careful people. *Smug* (from Low German *smuk*, "pretty") stood for "trim", "neat", "smooth", in the 16th century, and Room quotes Shakespeare on "the smug and silver Trent" running "fair and evenly". It must have registered in the course of time that trim, neat and (of course) smooth people tended to be pleased with themselves. *Buxom* ("bowsome", or inclined to submit) moved from abstract "pliant" to concrete "plump and comely"—do plump people incline to obedience? "Let me have men about me that are fat", said Caesar—while *bombast* (Latin *bombyx*, "silk"; cf. bombazine) shifted from concrete "cotton wool", used for padding, to abstract "pompous (woolly, padded) language". *Icon* was used for any image, picture or statue, until 19th-century travellers to Russia virtually cornered the word for their own purposes. And in the 14th century a *tippler* was a seller of drink, a tapster. It would seem that later on the expression was more urgently required for the customers, who outnumbered the suppliers.

Some words grew befuddled, even managing to carry contradictory meanings. *With* expressed "against" (cognate with German *wider*), but somehow took on its current meaning, perhaps by confusion with Germanic *mid* (modern German *mit*), while still indicating opposition in "withstand" and "withhold" and in such phrases as "compete with" and "at odds with".

*Crib* has darted backwards and forwards, between "manger", "wicker basket", "hovel" or "lodgings", "child's bed", "steal" (thieves' cant, perhaps with an eye on "basket"), and hence to both "plagiarise" and "steal a semblance of knowledge by resorting illicitly to translations".

The history of *snob* is equally tangled and rather more interesting. In the 18th century it was a dialect word for "cobbler", but also Cambridge University slang for a townsman as distinct from a gownsman. It came to embrace people of humble station in general—the opposite of "nobs", as it were. In the following century, possibly helped by Thackeray, and via the sense of "vulgar or ostentatious person", it moved with something of a jolt from "lower-class person with no pretensions to gentility" to its present mishmash of meanings. Thus, "lower-class person with genteel pretensions", "person with inordinate (i.e. vulgar) admiration for wealth or social position", someone who flaunts his intellectual or aesthetic superiority, or one who is excessively conscious of his (generally middling) place in the social hierarchy: i.e. "stuck-up". In places where men work I have heard the horrid but pungent expression "snot-gobbler" (cf. "snotty", "snooty") applied to the last-named class of snobs.

EVERY PAGE OF *Dictionary of Changes in Meaning* holds something to amuse or amaze. *Pearmain* is a variety of apple and not, as you might suppose, a pear, but all the same it was earlier a pear, even though the name itself derives from Parma. A *stationer*, that's to say a bookseller, was so called because he kept a shop instead of hawking his wares. From books to paper and ink is a short step.

In the 16th century *exaggerate* had its Latin sense of "pile up" or "accumulate", and Room quotes from a Puritan attack on the theatre: "they exaggerate a mountain of mire". I have come across "over-exaggerate" in a political context, perhaps simply analogous to the common "more unique", though possibly implying that while all politicians overstate, this particular one exceeded the bounds. Up until the 18th

[2] *The Joy of Words: A Bedside Book for English Lovers*. By FRITZ SPIEGL. Elm Tree Books/Hamish Hamilton, £5.95.

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century *starve* (cf. German *sterben*) used to mean "die", and often still does.

*Holocaust* in the 13th century signified a whole (Greek *holos*) burnt (cf. "caustic") offering, and for long retained the connotation of "wholesale destruction by fire". "Sacrifices of any kind—lives, fortunes, love, remarkably even of a college fellowship—were 'holocausts' from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century", Robert Burchfield writes in *The English Language*. Today the word is loosely employed for any sort of massacre, or terrorist killings, or devastation (e.g. the chopping down of forests), and, as "the Holocaust" with a capital H, quite precisely (cf. Elie Wiesel).

*Bomb*, we gather, was earlier pronounced "bum". It seems to have come directly from French *bombe*; and Dr Johnson is surely not the only person to have supposed that the first syllable of *bonfire* was French *bon*. Alas, it is the much less jolly "bone", whether animal or human. *Carouse* may have arrived via military contacts from the French, but the French took it from the German (as Fritz Spiegl points out): *trink gar aus*, "drink right up". No change there. In the 14th century and later the term *mummy* denoted medicinal preparations made from mummies, genuine or false. Room omits to give the Persian original, *mum*, wax—"Where's the honey, Mummy?"—wax being used in embalming. We may wonder what exactly Donne had in mind when he wrote,

> *Hope not for mind in women; at their best*
> *Sweetness and wit, they are but Mummy, possess'd.*

*Soothe* is a variant of "sooth", truth, and at first meant "prove to be true", "verify", subsequently acquiring such senses as "encourage" and "flatter by agreeing" or "humour", which in turn led to the current meaning of "calm" or "mitigate". Understandably there is no suggestion that the truth shall make us carefree.

"Mufti" and "effete" are words Room might think of adding to his generous assortment. From the Arabic "to give a legal decision, decide a point of law", the use of *mufti* to signify a Muslim priest or expounder of Koranic law is self-explanatory. But how did it come to mean "civilian dress as worn by someone entitled to wear uniform", especially when those who are involved in the law often dress up rather quaintly? Dating the sense from 1816, and quoting from Ernest Weekley's *Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (1921), Partridge opines that it may derive from representations in the early 19th-century theatre of officers off duty wearing vaguely Oriental garb, "flowered dressing-gown and tasselled smoking-cap". Burchfield mentions Evelyn Waugh's pleasure at discovering from a dictionary that *effete* primarily meant "having given birth"; related is "foetus". By a natural extension, Burchfield remarks, the word came to signify "worn out by bearing young", and was applied to barren farm animals during the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1796, however, Burke described France as showing "symptoms of being almost effete". Now suggesting someone or some institution unlikely to bear or sire a child or produce anything else requiring effort, the word hasn't strayed very far.

Though never in the modern sense *flippant* (initially meaning "nimble", from "fillip", stimulus), Adrian Room is not averse to a joke. After a first appearance as "penis", *verge* (Latin "rod") came to signify "rod of office" (cf. "verger"). Thence it referred to land subject to the Lord High Steward and his wand of office; then to the boundary of such land; and finally—having trudged from the genital to the marginal—to "border" or "edge". Since in French the word still bears the anatomical purport, Room wonders what French visitors make of the notice put up at soggy English roadsides: "Soft Verges".

This might offer a natural passage to Fritz Spiegl's book, which is allusively subtitled *A Bedside Book for English Lovers*, although a more earnest transition lies in the thought that while Room could be used by permissivists as ammunition against prescriptivists, Spiegl demonstrates the shameful accidents that happen when we relax our attention for an easy-going split second.

The last true English-speaker is bound to be a foreigner. Those who, like Spiegl, have had to *learn* English instead of plucking it out of the air will notice errors and absurdities where the native speaker is either oblivious or acquiescent. And, judging by Spiegl, they will be shocked and enraged, rather as refugees from some repressive régime are distressed and bemused by the wanton liberties they observe in a free democracy. Spiegl is meticulous—in the modern sense, for he shows no sign of fear—in distinguishing between English-lovers and English lovers, and between *conjure* (kŭn'jer), invoke or perform magical trick, and *conjure* (konjoor'), to appeal solemnly to someone to do something.

He cites such ludicrous headlines as Flies to have Twins in Ireland and Lady seeks Companion in Bath; such unfortunate wording as that of a Radio 4 interviewee, "My brother's moved to Belfast and started a glazier's shop, and now he's making a bomb"; a *Radio Times* billing of "Reginald Dixon and his Organ supported by strings"; and, in a radio play adapted from a novel by Mrs Gaskell, "I rather fancy her dead." The saddest slip of this general kind was Robert Browning's, when he made his cheery Pippa refer to "cowls and twats, monks and nuns", under the impression that a twat was a species of nunnish headgear. Spiegl conjectures that the poet was led astray by some lines of verse published in 1660:

> *They talk't of his having a Cardinall's Hat,*
> *They'd send him as soon an Old Nun's Twat.*

If that is so, then it is a pitiable instance of what we might call *honi soit qui bien y pense*.

The mealy mouth, the loud mouth, the misguided mouth, the slovenly mouth ("icelated shahs" and "gnats it" from the Weather Forecast)—they all stink in Spiegl's nostrils. Many of his black beasts are seen prowling the jungles of Fleet Street, as witness "The Alban Berg Quartet of Vietnam"

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(*Daily Telegraph*), no doubt playing "Chiu Bet, Mo Tsat and Hai Dun, not to mention Yo Han, the Vietnamese Waltz King". Once, when his typewriter went wrong and he could only manage single spacing, the compositors sent the copy back to the sub-editor, obliging him to cut out each line of typing and paste the strips, double-spaced, on another sheet of paper. Hence it is with some glee that he asks whether SOGAT 82 is a fine vintage, and cites a press description of the General Secretary as "Miss Brenda Dean of SOGAT, 82". Acronyms offer further scandalised fun: "I've got the HOTS for you" may merely indicate that a BBC secretary has the Head of Office Training Services on the line. And perhaps it takes a foreigner to detect something unappetising in the inscription VOM on the label of a pork pie from the Vale of Mowbray.

THEN THERE is what, though it is fast usurping the centre, we call the lunatic fringe. The Inner London Education Authority advertises for a Mother Tongue Inspector ("say Aah?" Spiegl enquires). Rochdale Borough Council seeks a Delinquency Manager. The Greater London Council resolves to black the word "blacked" from its industrial relations vocabulary. Liverpool Catering Training College offers an unambitious Two-Year Sandwich Course in Food Technology. St Andrews University seeks to fill its Chair of Learning Difficulties ("We used to call it the Dunce's Stool", adds Spiegl's informant).

HILARIOUS THOUGH the book is in its parts, in its totality it paints an alarming picture of the world we live in. Can it be wholly accurate? Do fond parents really call their children Hernia, Placenta, Gonadia, Positive Wasserman, Amanita (a deadly genus of fungi). . . ? (Well, Candida is a fairly common name, and it too can stand for an unpleasant fungus.) Were Robertson the jam-makers deprived of a £40,000 contract by the Greater London Council because they refused to give up their gollywog symbol? Can the famous Black Dyke Mills Band truly be enjoying a huge success among black American lesbians? And is *lib*, as in Women's Lib, honestly an old English term meaning to castrate? Yes, so the dictionary says; and Spiegl subsequently had a letter confirming that Scottish schoolboys call a sharp pocket-knife a "libber". He is generally able to authenticate his exhibits.[3]

Remote from the native authors of *The Story of English* and many another wordsman and wordswoman (enjoy! lie back and enjoy!), Spiegl is a firm believer in "Laura Norder", a veritable Mirror for Magistrates. Just as he would have kept the imperial weights and measures and the pre-decimal currency, so he prefers our English *sp* at the start of his surname. "Anyone who religiously uses the correct *shp* is suspected of calling me a Bloody Foreigner."

[3] By the way, the solution to the clue in an alleged *Financial Times* crossword of c. 1969, "Listen carefully, or a sexual perversion (5, 2, 4, 4)", can be deduced with ease from the final entry under the first sense of *listen* in *The New Collins Thesaurus*. Unheard of! says the *Financial Times*. And so do I.

# AUTHORS

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## *POINTS OF THE COMPASS*

*Letter from Haiti*

# The Day of the Exorcists

## *By Rainer Fabian*

I WANT TO GIVE an account of the "great spells" that the people of Haiti cast one Friday last winter in order to be "freed from all the evil" that a dictatorship had brought down upon this Caribbean island.

The story of that day, when the Haitians sought to banish their "malaise" with the evil eye, goes back a long way. On nights when, oppressed by poverty and tormented by wild imaginings, people here have trouble getting to sleep, the inhabitants of La Saline (the Saltworks), a slum in the capital city of Port-au-Prince, set up a wooden table in the street and hold a party. The ice crackles as it drops into the warm brown rum; the air smells of sweat and urine.

Two men begin "the dance of the Duvalier dictatorship", wearing the black top hat worn by "Papa Doc", founding father of the dictatorship, their faces dusted with flour, corncob pipes hanging from rouged lips. They perform the sort of whorish dance they believe was danced in the Duvaliers' white palace: stripping the way they believe Michèle used to strip for Jean-Claude (alias "Baby Doc"), the last terrible ruler of this land. They tear their black jackets open, rub up against each other, stumble, and fall about. They make a grotesque pair.

And they sing the satirical song about the gluttonous giant baby and his big-spending wife, Michèle Bennett, the couple whom the people had driven from the country a year before. "So there she sits, the lovely Michèle", they sing, "in a gilded French cage, an exile who can never return to Haiti! That's it, Michèle, it's all over! *Fini!* . . ."

Here, in the darkness of the slums, the Duvaliers' reign of terror is already like a time-worn street-ballad. Yet it was just over a year ago (on 7 February 1986) that Haiti awoke from its nightmare. The Haitians have been celebrating their victory ever since—as if freedom and democracy were already installed and a new and better life under way. In Haiti, too, having a revolution is easier than achieving a better society.

When the Duvaliers, ditched by the White House, flew out on a US Air Force jet with their suitcases full of money, they left a legacy behind them: Duvalierism, minus only Papa and Baby Doc. They left the dreaded secret police, the corps of 15,000 Tontons Macoutes (it means "Uncle Man-Eaters"), and a ruling class of wealthy families, corrupt officials, and drug-dealers. And they left the phalanx of Ministers and Under-Secretaries of State that had served the "terrible doctor" and his family for 29 years.

"When you walk into the ministries", I was told by Ulrick Dessaint, proprietor of the *Table Ronde* restaurant in Port-au-Prince, "you see the same faces wherever you look. And when you go to the palace, the headquarters of the government then and now, your champagne is even served by the same waiters who used to bow and scrape to Baby Doc. . . ."

In the wealthy districts life goes on as if nothing had happened. The servants still glide about like shadows, scoop leaves out of the pool, all bustling attentiveness; rock the little children to sleep; and speak to their masters and mistresses in curiously toneless voices—as if they had no right to a voice at all.

In the bar of *El Rancho*, representatives of American companies sit over a glass of rum punch, discussing their chances of regaining a foothold in this land of "golden opportunities". *El Rancho* is the only respectable hotel still open in Haiti: its guests walk on red carpets and sip their drinks beneath Art Deco light-fittings. The chambermaids demonstrate the dimmer switch for new arrivals, showing them how it goes on and off, like a dying and resurgence.

The discreet charm of this bourgeoisie has a cynical tinge, even when it is telling the truth. "The Japanese work hard because they love work", so the manager of a firm making electric motors tells me. "But the Haitians work even harder—because they know there are ten men behind them waiting to pick up the job."

The plain fact is that there are more people unemployed than in the worst days of the Duvaliers. Dozens of foreign firms have left the island in these "uncertain" times; and increasing numbers of "boat people" risk death to reach the fabled shores of Florida because they dread "the revenge of the Tontons Macoutes. . . ."

From the villa-strewn suburb of Pétionville, where sev-

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*Since his visit to Haiti, the provisional military administration in Port-au-Prince has reiterated its promise to hold free elections and to effect "a happy transition from dictatorship to democracy". On the February anniversary of the departure of Duvalier, tanks and troops were in the streets again to break up demonstrations. General Namphy has argued that Haitians "have lost the habit of voting. . . ." But a correspondent in the capital reported to "The Independent" (London) on fears of "traditional electoral techniques of intimidation, bribery and ballot-stuffing. . . ."*

*In the referendum of 29 March, a new Constitution appears to have been "overwhelmingly approved" ("The Times") which would "sanction political parties and guarantee human rights. . . . No disturbances were reported; armed soldiers were on duty at most polling stations."*



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eral hundred millionaires relax on their terraces, it is no more than seven kilometres to La Saline, but it might be as far as the moon. From above, the place looks like an army of cockroaches with its brown, corrugated-iron roofs. And when you drive down into what used to be mangrove swamp you appreciate why Western social workers have branded La Saline with a bleak superlative—"the worst slum in the world".

In this place of hard-packed mud and excrement, some 10,000 people exist without a lavatory among them. There are old men who live by selling rain-water, mothers who wash their babies in the sewers, children who stir cement in tin cans to earn a few coppers.

At night the inhabitants crawl into corners, squeezed against the wall, or squat listlessly outside huts, waiting for sleep or for their turn to sleep: because people take turns sleeping in La Saline, with too few straw mats to go round, and up to a dozen people to each tiny room. Children, drawn like insects to the light, crouch under street-lamps to pore over their schoolbooks. And when the rainy season comes round and the water level rises, the slum-dwellers roll up their straw mats, gather together their few possessions, and climb on to the roof (if there is a roof and it will bear their weight); and there they spend the night under a plastic awning (if they have one, and it is not too full of holes).

CAN THE PEOPLE of La Saline have faith in the country's new strong man, Lieutenant-General Henri Namphy, who so absent-mindedly rules Haiti, as if all its poverty were no concern of his? They trust none of the "middle-class parties", and none of the 200 (or more) Presidential candidates. They trust no one but the Churches and *Radio Soleil*, the radio station in the Port-au-Prince Roman Catholic seminary that is run by ten technicians and a dozen priests.

*Radio Soleil* is like a public notice-board for the great mass of oppressed, underprivileged Haitians. Letters drop into its wooden letter-box at the rate of over 600 a month, often signed by entire villages, the illiterate represented by hundreds of thumb-prints, some with crumbs of earth still adhering to them. Open letters addressed to Henri Namphy, clumsy transcriptions of the Créole dialect—as if some petitioner were bowing low before Louis XIV in his powdered wig: "*Ecselans!* Our situation is intolerable! *Ecselans!* Help us! *Ecselans!*"

Journalists find themselves on the receiving end of similar cries for help when they drive into the interior. "Sometimes it's like a riot", a TV producer told me. "We had to hire a civic hall to give everyone a hearing. . . ." Just knowing that the reporters are on the way affects villages like the prospect of imminent deliverance—"as if we were voodoo priests and could perform the impossible."

Local superstition and Haitian politics are inseparably bound up with each other. The citizens of Port-au-Prince gathered in a mob outside the Presidential Palace when a rumour spread that the nine bronze-coloured guinea-fowl—symbols alike of Haiti and of the Duvaliers—had abandoned the statue of the "Unknown Slave" and flown back to the palace. Thousands flocked to the palace gates and shouted for General Namphy, demanding physical proof that he was still alive. Nothing could be worse than what the symbol had appeared to herald—the return of the hated Duvaliers.

Somewhere on this Caribbean island it is always the night of the long knives, with Haitians running amok, sometimes over nothing more than a drop of water. Looters attack lorries carrying food. They pickaxe their way through warehouse walls and break into schools where food aid is stored. The depots have had to be guarded by watch-towers and ringed with barbed wire. Vehicles transporting foodstuffs get the kind of vigilant security normally reserved for money transports. Religious fanatics indulge in regular man-hunts: spurred on by *Radio Lumière* (a station financed by Florida Baptists), they are working for the eradication of the indigenous voodoo cults. "Heathens" are dragged into church, hauled up to the altar, and banged over the head seven times with a Bible to "convert" them.

And they are the lucky ones, I am told; others are simply massacred. Hordes of these fanatics ransack voodoo temples and set fire to the ritual objects. Over a hundred priests (*hongans*) and priestesses (*mambos*) have been struck down, hacked with machetes, and *déchouqués*.

The term has its origins in Haitian agriculture. Farmers use it when they are clearing ground and pull out a tree-stump "by the roots". It was taken over by the voodoo priests, who seek in their exorcisms to *déchouquer* the evil that resides in men: tear it out, exterminate it, kill it.

Today this murderous word is used for everything connected with casting out Duvalierism. Sending someone packing from the Duvalier/Bennett clique is *déchouquage*. Demolishing the house of a Tonton Macoute, kicking down the door, smashing in the windows: *déchouquage*. "It is a holy word", says Pastor Sylvio Claude, chairman of the Christian Democratic Party of Haiti, "and everyone still on Duvalier's side must be *déchouqué*. . . ."

PORT-AU-PRINCE is a hotbed of rumour. Rumours about death squads, said to be responsible for hundreds of unsolved murders; about training-camps in which thousands of Tontons Macoutes are preparing for a coup; about weapons supposedly distributed by the Army and the Duvaliers' former guards. There is even a new political party made up of the old faces: the *Parti du Rassemblement d'Entente Nationale* (PREN), and its members include Adrien Raymond, Baby Doc's Information Minister, and the former Cabinet chief Fritz Hypolithe. He was the man who, acting for the Duvaliers at the insistence of the US government, helped to rid Haiti of the swine-fever that was carried on the shoes of tourists, and butchered the farmers' one remaining asset in the process.

On the eve of the day of the great spells, there was a meeting at the *Table Ronde*, the Créole restaurant from which you can see the white dome of the Presidential Palace. The opponents of PREN were foregathered, the men of the "7 February Club"—and they too think they have a dead sure remedy for Haiti.

They were drinking whisky, which is good for revolutionary

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courage, and eating the shellfish called *lambi*, said to improve virility. The mood of this all-male company was oddly excited, their conversation full of fantastic prophecies of blood-baths and civil war. I am still not sure whether they viewed the prospect with dread or with a secret hope.

"The day the first bomb goes off here", one of them said, "Haiti will become another Lebanon."

NEXT MORNING, on a day that was to grow so hot that people suffered heatstrokes in Port-au-Prince, the whole country was in a ferment. Alerted by *Radio Soleil*, crowds gathered around the transistors in the taxi-buses known as *tap-taps*, in sailors' bars down by the harbour, in churches. Since dawn, without interruption, an endless harangue had been pouring from every radio set: "*Nous allons les déchouquer!* Today is the day of the final revolution! . . ."

At eleven o'clock, on the dot, *Radio Soleil* gave the signal for the great spell.

In the suburb of Delmar they beat with their machetes on drainage pipes and street-lamp columns. In the Rue de Miracle there was rhythmical smashing of beer bottles. In the market in the middle of town they drummed on the asphalt with lengths of sugar cane, and at the Presidential Palace they hammered on the railings with iron bars.

People began to emerge from the narrow streets of the city centre—in their hundreds at first, then in their thousands. They advanced warily, a tentative procession, as if afraid of the eerie emptiness of the square before the palace. At first they simply sat down—on walls, on fences, on grassy mounds at the foot of monuments—and stared at the vast white building, symbol of power over Haiti . . . as if they could hypnotise the palace and all it contained; as if their looks could kill—the way they believe the voodoo priest can kill merely by looking.

Then they tore branches from the trees and started chanting in chorus: "*We felled the tree but forgot about the roots!*" They sank to their knees and raised imploring hands: "Virgin Mary, help us!" They danced and sang in Créole: "What has the Army brought us? *Nou jeté caca! Nou pren caca!* (We chuck the shit away, then shovel it up again.)" In many places there were bloody fights on either side of street barricades erected out of old tyres and then set on fire.

The same thing was going on all over the island. In Cap Haïtien they were parading through the town centre, singing. In the port of Gonaïves they were building barricades. In the village church of Milo, in the shadow of what is left of the jungle, they were praying before a wooden cross to which the priest had nailed protest posters.

At midday, on our way back to *Radio Soleil* where a procession was due to start, we drove into a trap. Hundreds of demonstrators brandishing stones and iron bars forced our vehicle to a halt, shouting: "Are you against the Government or for the Government?"

I pushed the button on the car radio—all I could think of at the time—and turned up the church station. We listened to the end of a hymn and then a preacher's voice. "Today", the voice said, "everything may change!" The iron bars fell back and we were allowed to proceed.

BY FIVE IN THE AFTERNOON it was all over. The citizens of Port-au-Prince slunk away to their homes, and suddenly the streets were deserted. The capital appeared to have slipped into an exhausted sleep, although dusk had yet to fall over the city.

At *El Rancho* the punters headed for the casino to gamble the average Haitian's annual income with a single chip. At the *Table Ronde* the talk went on till deep in the night: what had the day achieved, and what had been the true casualty toll? In Haiti such figures will never be known.

President Namphy avoided any reference to the massive

## *"We Felled the Tree, but Forgot about the Roots. . . ."*

A WORD ABOUT *the former French colony of Haiti: it has been independent since 1804. Slaves abducted from Africa fought a thirteen-year war of liberation to achieve autonomy. For a certain measure of freedom, however, the Haitians had to wait another 182 years.*

*Until the early years of this century, feudal overlords, military chiefs, and government bureaucrats parcelled up the country between them. From 1915 to 1934 it was occupied by the USA. The election of François Duvalier as president in 1957 marked the beginning of a brutal dictatorship—"Papa Doc", as the former country doctor had himself called, used his secret police (the "Tontons Macoutes") to establish a reign of terror, banned all political parties but his own, had 30,000 political opponents assassinated, and eventually appointed his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier, to succeed him.*

**"Baby Doc" became President at the age of nineteen, on his father's death in 1971. One or two liberalising measures left Haiti a long way short of democracy. In 1985 when "Baby Doc" had himself confirmed by referendum as Head of State for life, he triggered the revolution that brought down the Duvalier dynasty. It was the Americans, who had been financing his régime for years, who forced him to resign. He left the country on 7 February 1986, and since then has been living in France.**

**Haiti under the Duvaliers remained one of the most backward countries in the world. The illiteracy rate is almost 80%, the annual per capita income of the five million inhabitants is around 300 dollars, and average life-expectancy is little more than 50 years. One child in eight dies before reaching its first birthday.**

THE PRESENT *military régime under General Henri Namphy, riddled with Duvalier men, has promised presidential elections but has yet to set a date. The economy has declined even further. "We were once 'the pearl of the Antilles' ", I heard an editor say. "We have become a Caribbean garbage dump. . . ."*

***R.F.***

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demonstration outside his palace. All the General would admit in his television address was that he understood "how people feared a reawakening of the nightmare against which Haiti fought so heroically. . . ."

The only man who publicly showed himself moved by the nation's anger was Minister of Justice and Foreign Minister François Latortue. With one exception he proceeded to fire the entire Haitian diplomatic corps—"Duvalierists" to a man; it is probably also due to his influence that PREN has gone back "underground", though some of its members say the Party has been disbanded.

What really happened in the brooding heat of that November day? Haiti tried, like an exorcist, to wish away the things that plague the island like an incurable illness: the slums and the undrinkable water, the Duvalierists and the Tontons Macoutes, the deadly mangrove swamps and that symbol of power, the arrogant white palace at the heart of Port-au-Prince.

## Gdańsk Interior at 4 a.m.

The girl half-dressed in bed
hunched, blankets around her,
a man flat out on the floor,
two others elbow-propped
at a little formica table
unable to let their heads drop
for the litter of glasses,
a fourth standing shirtless:
he is reciting a poem
of beautiful names, some of them
English: he is sharing his country
with yours, a world-beating team,
all stars. His litany pauses.
From one of the elbows
a voice demands—"Who
is best team in the world?"
Inspired, perhaps by vodka,
"Italy", you answer. "Tak!"
"And who is second best team
in the world?" Racking your brain
you guess at an answer, recall
you are now in the east—"West
[stressed] Germany"—"Tak!"
Pause. A look deep into you,
then—"And who is third
best team in the world?"
Was it mocking the folly of such
designation, that stressing of "*third*"?
Was it vainglory?—The answer
is easy—"Poland!"—"Poland
[drawn out as a child is shown
he has found no more than the obvious
answer]" then "Tak!" and a roar
like that for a goal. The man
on the floor turns over.
The girl gathers the blankets
tighter around her. The shirtless man
stands, swaying. Something
other than vodka has entered
his soul. Silently, he negotiates
the air between where he stands
and the floor. Successful
he stretches out stiff
as if standing, and sleeps,
his mouth curled round a smile
so small, strangers would miss it.

*Desmond Graham*

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# LETTERS

## "Our Kid"

THE USE by B. K. Ngabwe of the word "kid" in his translation of a poem by Stefan George flies in the face of everything that high priest of language ever stood for.

MANFORD BELMORE

*Erlangen*
*West Germany*

## What Stranger?

THE PUBLICATION of a new translation of Stefan George's moving poem "*Mein kind kam heim*" by B. K. Ngabwe (ENCOUNTER, February) is a welcome event, indeed a sign of victory of artistic perfection, purity, and spiritual force in a world of deadly political prejudices. Stefan George's poem appeared in his *The Seventh Ring*. Its theme is the young son's return from the sea, having conquered danger and experienced passion; he comes home as a stranger. But the poem does not bear any title.

However, there is another poem in Stefan George's earlier cycle, *Tapestry of Life* (*Teppich des Lebens*), which is in fact entitled "The Stranger" ("*Die Fremde*"), who in contrast to "*Mein kind kam heim*" is depicted as a witch-like demonic *Naturwesen* invading and changing a hitherto simple life. Perhaps B. K. Ngabwe also entitled "*Mein kind kam heim*" "The Stranger", as both poems introduce a stranger.

A few quotations will reveal Mr Ngabwe's particularly happy renderings of the poem: e.g. "his step swings to/ a tune of fear endured" . . . or: "tanned cheeks, they glow with a russet bloom". . . . However, in the first line the slangy expression "kid" creates a somewhat discordant tone. Similarly, in the last stanza: "My arm embraced/ a thing unmoved by me." Stefan George's lines are: "*Mein arm umschliesst/Was unbewegt von mir zu andrer welt/Erblüht.*" In the context the word *was* suggests, instead of "a thing", a more human expression: "My arm embraces one who. . . ."

A comparison of Ngabwe's creative version of "*Mein kind kam heim*" with other English renderings (by Cyril Scott, 1910; Carol North Valhope and Ernst Morwitz, 1944; and Olga Marx and E. Morwitz, 1949) would further bring out Stefan George's special stylistic and rhythmic artistry and imaginative vision into full relief.

AUGUST CLOSS
*Emeritus Professor of German*
*University of Bristol*

I'M BEMUSED to see a poem provoke correspondence in ENCOUNTER. Is this unusual?

Mr Belmore and Professor Closs are worried by "kid". Other people have been too; but not me. The "slangy" quality of the word has been rather worn down by long years of current speech. It is now more an intimate usage than a form of argot, and that's how (and why) I used it in "The Stranger". If Stefan George was a high priest of language, he was also capable of work that is not hieratic—like this little song. I wanted a gentle, easy tone, and translated accordingly.

My thanks to Professor Closs for his kind remarks. The curious apersonality of "thing" which he mentions is deliberate. One of the marvels of the German is that it catches that odd and paradoxical experience of something close and yet utterly foreign, apersonal. I think his suggested rendering is actually further from this than mine.

The sneaking of poetry from one language to another is a notoriously intricate and enigmatic game. The best general guide for me has been Ezra Pound. My consolation has been the French proverb: "*Les traductions sont comme les femmes: lorsqu'elles sont belles, elles ne sont pas fidèles, et lorsque' elles sont fidèles, elles ne sont pas belles.*"

B. K. NGABWE

*Oxshott*
*Surrey*

## Yobbos & the Schools

WHAT A PITY that every time Jeffrey Richards writes a first-rate account of one of our social disasters ("The Hooligan Culture", November 1985; "Yobbery With Violence", February 1987), he invariably goes wrong in his proposals for a remedy. This time what is so extraordinary is that although he says that whatever hope there is must lie with education, he follows this up by quoting recent reports which leave us in no doubt at all that any such hope is frail indeed.

> "Verbal abuse of teachers, vandalising of their property, and even physical violence are regular occurrences in our schools. . . . A third of all classes are badly taught. . . ."

And if this material produces some doubt as to whether education is, after all, quite the remedy we are seeking Mr Richards finds the corrective he desperately needs in the 1985 H.M.I.s Report which—predictably and ridiculously—attempts to pin the responsibility on a parsimonious government.

> "The majority of school buildings are dilapidated and decaying . . . schools are chronically short of resources; 80% of children have to share basic textbooks. Morale in the teaching profession is at rock bottom. . . . And the situation is no better in the universities. Weakened, cut-back, and demoralised. . . . Money is desperately needed to build and repair school premises, buy books and equipment and train teachers. Money is needed to restore the funding of universities and polytechnics. . . ."

Only then, after hammering away at the supposed appalling shortage of money, does Mr Richards hint that "along with investment, the *philosophy* of education in this country needs radical attention". And yet still, in his final paragraph, he manages to confuse the issue once more by asserting that:

> "If our schools and universities, properly funded and organised, are not in the vanguard of the onslaught on ignorance, prejudice and barbarism, the future will lie in the hands of savages."

IT DOES NOT APPEAR to have occurred to Mr Richards that whatever else is at fault with education it is *not* shortage of money. At most levels the relationship between education (the daily routines of conscientious teaching, pupil interest, discipline and mutual respect, long hours of often boring work) and money is absolutely minimal.

Every sort of educational virtue is compatible with a gross lack of funding, just as it has been for centuries. Funding—exorbitant and wasteful funding—is precisely what we have had since the great expansion of 40 years ago, and the consequences are all about us. Funding totally mistaken ideas about education, generally propagated and encouraged by Her Majesty's Inspectors and by Training Colleges, has resulted in a demoralised teaching force, their confidence shattered, and an undisciplined and illiterate mass of young people whose expectations of lucrative and exciting employment are more or less commensurate with their lack of understanding and training.

What is so tragic about the situation is that as long as money is seen as the principal answer the country at large will be in the position of the poor little rich boy; and the very remedy will not only exacerbate the disease but prevent us from looking for the right sort of solution. To see how this operates in practice, we need look no further than the recent findings of the independent Audit Commission reported in *The Times* (29 January 1987). "Figures cited in the report show that every year, 95,000 children leave inner London schools with no O-levels or their CSE equivalent"; and yet as is widely known, ILEA funding as an education authority is already



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well above average. The report also reveals that the eight Labour Councils which are already spending an average of £7 a week per household more than a second group of equally deprived London authorities are doing so without producing any observable benefit.

No, shortage of money has nothing to do with our problems (if anything the precise opposite is true); and one of the major reasons for "the New Barbarism" is the belief—the incredible and preposterous belief—that education is just a matter of paying. How many disillusioned parents in the private sector could vouch that it is not, and there at least they generally have some of the right ingredients besides.

MICHAEL TATHAM

*Little Odell*
*Bedfordshire*

MICHAEL TATHAM undermines his credibility by dismissing the 1985 Report of H. M. Inspectors of Schools as "predictable and ridiculous". This report was based on visits to 1,648 schools and on reports from the district inspectors in each of the 97 Education Authorities in England. On what first-hand evidence and by what authority does Mr Tatham choose to reject their findings? He does not enlighten us. Instead he trots out the tired old bogey of "loony Left-wing" authorities, a minority whose follies and extravagances are disavowed by almost everyone, including the leadership of the Labour Party.

Having investigated teaching methods and standards, equipment and book provision, accommodation and management of schools, the HMI Report concluded.

> "Few involved in providing or providing for education can take much, if any, pride in a national service within which three-tenths of all lessons seen were unsatisfactory; one-fifth was adversely affected by poor accommodation; a quarter was suffering from shortages of equipment; in three-fifths of the schools where an assessment was possible, the teachers' perceptions of pupils' potential and needs were inadequate . . . . The damaging effects of all this on pupil performance and on the teachers' morale and their ability and willingness to bring about much-needed change are showing themselves clearly."

The report was widely accepted as authoritative, and it was partly on the basis of its findings that the Conservative Government, having neglected and run down the education service for years, began to put money into it. It was perhaps even more because they were beginning to lose by-elections as a result of parental discontent at the level of educational provision.

Mr Tatham wholly misrepresents my argument by suggesting that I regard money as the only solution. It is but a first step, the necessary cost of the recreation of a solid base upon which a decent education system can be constructed. Both in my recent article and in its predecessor I called for the introduction of tighter discipline, the return to formal methods of English teaching (grammar, spelling, punctuation, comprehension), and above all the inculcation of self-discipline, civilised values, and respect for others.

Mr Tatham is right in suggesting that one of the causes of our educational and cultural malaise is the wrong-headed educational policies and methods which obtained an ascendancy in the 1960s. Their legacy was only too cruelly seen recently in the conviction of a 13-year-old boy for the murder of another pupil in the playground of his school, a school with a chronic record of indiscipline and where the murderer had previously burned down the art block. That is the kind of situation that my proposals seek to remedy.

THE LEVEL of violence and vandalism which I cited in my article is not, as Mr Tatham suggests, evidence that education has failed but that education (as I understand and define it) has not yet been tried. It is noteworthy that where I propose a solution, Mr Tatham advocates none. He evidently prefers anarchy to culture. I prefer to preserve with the values and virtues that have given us everything that is best in human society.

JEFFREY RICHARDS

*Department of History*
*University of Lancaster*

## Russian "Exceptions"?

MORE POWER to the voices of Galina Vishnevskaya and George Urban ("Galina", ENCOUNTER, December 1986 and January 1987)—and what a window on the Soviet Union and the Russian mind!

But something essential remains to be explained. Galina tells us that the Russian people are strangers to the idea of freedom and democracy: that their emancipation from serfdom is incomplete; that their poverty and backwardness have turned envy into a national characteristic and one, to boot, that can be easily made to serve the aggressive designs of the Soviet system.

But if the Russian people are so mean and uncivilised—how come that freedom-loving, generous and mature souls of the kind Galina herself represents have emerged, and emerged in fair numbers, from Soviet Russian society?

The problem did not escape Urban's attention, for early in the interview he asks whether it isn't true that "the reverse side of Soviet baseness is an exceptionally deep yearning for truth and a selfless determination to act on it?" But Mrs Vishnevskaya did not answer his question. Could she?

I'D LIKE to know why it is that a goodly measure of the sources of the spiritual enrichment of our own culture come from Russia these days—Solzhenitsyn, Bukovsky, Sakharov, Orlov, Marchenko, Rostropovich, Galina herself, to say nothing of Akhmatova, Mandelstam, Shostakovich and Pasternak of an earlier generation. Does the human spirit prosper under certain kinds of oppression rather than liberty? Do we, in fact, benefit in some unfathomable way, from the use of the knout? Or is there some other explanation?

NANCY PORTLOCK

*Newcastle-on-Tyne*

## "The Lost Tribe"

FIRST let me say how much I enjoyed Melvin J. Lasky's "Strangers in a Promised land" (ENCOUNTER, January); it was imaginative and passionate—journalism at its very best.

The only point I would make is that there may have been a little confusion about the idea of "the lost tribe".

*1.* There is *no* evidence that the Falashas are the "lost tribe" of Dan. This is a myth which can almost certainly be traced back to Eldad ha-Dani, the 9th-century Jewish traveller; and it probably served as the basis for the ruling of the Radbaz on the basis of which that contemporary Rabbinic ruling (Falashas = Dan) is based.

2. The lost tribes have nothing to do with Judah. They are the tribes taken into captivity by the Assyrians c.721 BC from the Northern Kingdom. The two tribes of Judah and Levi stuck it out for a long time after that—until 586 BC—when they went off to Babylon before returning with Ezra and Nehemiah. It's interesting to note that although the lost tribes almost certainly assimilated to the population round and about the present city of Mosul, their continued existence was taken as *fact* by the Apocrypha, Talmud (except for Akiva), Josephus, and almost every Jewish writer thereafter, including Benjamin of Tudelah, until the 19th century!

But my real reason for writing was simply to say how much I enjoyed the piece.

TUDOR PARFITT

*School of Oriental and African Studies*
*University of London*

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# Life & Letters Today

*Baltimore*

MINSTREL TIME: *A white policeman in Baltimore who was dismissed for doing Al Jolson-style blackface routines during off-duty hours to make extra money has won an appeal to the US Supreme Court.*

*The case pitted the American Civil Liberties Union—which said Robert Berger, 38, had won "a clear victory for First Amendment rights" guaranteeing freedom of speech—against the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, which called Mr Berger's act "a throwback to the days of the minstrels, when blacks were portrayed as clowns, simpletons, buffoons, apes and other animals of the lower kingdom".*

*Policeman Berger plans to apply for reinstatement and back pay, and to keep his act going.*

*INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE*

*Los Angeles*

QUIZ: **That was no *pas de deux*, that was a summit meeting. Sixty per cent of California college students quizzed by an English professor didn't know who Mikhail Gorbachev was—several thought he was a ballet dancer—and fewer than half could identify Chaucer or Desmond Tutu. However, 60% were fully familiar with Erika Kane, a character in an afternoon soap opera.**

*DAILY MAIL*

*Moscow*

ORWELL IN MOSCOW: *The Soviet Union has renewed its critcism of the USA for "the watering down" of the Reagan-Gorbachev understandings at Reykjavik. According to TASS, the manner in which "the Washington propagandists" manipulate the clear and agreed positions reminds one of George Orwell's novel "1984"—History has to conform to the ruling interests.*

*Orwell's novel has never been published in the Soviet Union.*

*DIE WELT (Bonn)*

*London*

CHICKEN OUT: **The loony egalitarianism of London's socialist boroughs is rightly mocked: all those gay workshops, crusades against sexism and racism in children's books, professions of nuclear immunity. But I can't help [Philip Purser writes] warming to the pub outside Highbury and Islington station I pass every week. It proclaims in letters of gold that it is an Equal Opportunities pub, open to everyone regardless of colour, creed, disability, or sexual orientation. The name of the pub is "The Cock".**

*SUNDAY TELEGRAPH*

*London*

ONLY CONNECT: *If the law could not be changed to prevent the importation of inflatable rubber dolls then the courts in this country should "cock a snook" at the adverse ruling of the European Court, Lord Denning (former Master of the Rolls) suggested during question time in the House of Lords.*

**Lord Nugent of Guildford:** *Could he not ask the Home Secretary to study the 1959 Obscene Publications Act and consider drafting an amending Bill which would add manufacturing as well as publication to the Act?*

**Lord Denning:** *The Customs and Excise was right in condemning these articles as obscene and indecent, and the courts here were right and justified on the grounds of the Treaty of Rome by reason of public morality.*

**Lady Mar (Ind):** *Is it not better that men should obtain satisfaction from rubber ladies in private rather than going round terrorising and raping women in the streets?*

**Lord Young of Graffham:** *I cannot see the connection.*

*THE TIMES/HANSARD*

*London*

DEATH VALLEY: **What's in a name? My eye was caught by this example last week [Christopher Booker writes].**

**Wasn't it rather asking for trouble, as if they didn't have enough already, for British Nuclear Fuels to propose a village with the unfortunate name of Killingholme as a site for dumping waste?**

*SUNDAY TODAY*

*New York City*

DEADLY ERROR: *At a time when American interests are increasingly intertwined with those of other nations, many leaders in government, business, and education say the United States has been hurt by its inattention to foreign languages, cultures and affairs.*

*A recent study concluded: "We have yet to learn a critical lesson: the language of trade is the language of the customer. We do not adequately know the globe, nor the cultures of the people that inhabit it. That fact seriously impedes America's ability to participate in global decision-making."*

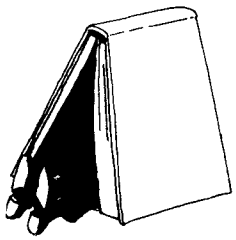
*When the makers of Pepsi-Cola moved into the Thai soft drink market, they began an advertising campaign with their American slogan,*

**"Come alive, you're in the Pepsi generation."**

*The company said it later realised that the Thai translation it was using said:*

**"Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead."**

*NEW YORK TIMES*



*Moscow*

NOVEL BEDFELLOWS: **The Stakhanovite labours of Russia's translators continue to reap rewards for that country's heroes.**

**In UNESCO's annual hit-parade of the world's most translated authors Lenin once again comes first with 370 translations during the year—well clear of Agatha Christie who is in second place with 216. Third place goes to Walt Disney, a short head in front of the Bible (which still holds the record as the world's most translated single book).**

**Further down the rankings the French story-teller, Jules Verne, scores well, edging Leonid Brezhnev out of fifth place.**

**But the real surprise is provided by the English writer of romantic fiction, Barbara Cartland. Her productivity has won her equal seventh place with Karl Marx.**

**Did ever two writers make stranger bedfellows?**

*FINANCIAL TIMES*

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## Liberty or License?

As a German reader of your magazine I have been fascinated by your continuing discussion of ethics, censorship, and journalism. Your major emphases—to judge from the articles by Melvin J. Lasky ("Towards a Theory of Journalistic Malpractice", ENCOUNTER, November 1985) and the series by Herb Greer on the Ethics of the Press (June, July-August, and December 1986)—appear to be on the justified suspicion of the integrity of the press: of the accuracy of the reports and the objectivity of the editors. Most of the liberal spokesmen in the Western world tend to put their emphases in the debate on the "Fourth Estate" elsewhere—on why governments are mistrusted, and the integrity (or lack of it) of officious attempts to censor and intervene.

Recently there was a curious and even outlandish case in my native Bavaria, involving a television show produced in Munich, a cultural showplace of its kind in the conflict between Catholic authoritarian tradition and cosmopolitan and free-thinking enlightenment. I put it to your readers: What was just in this case?

The dramatic turning-point in this specific altercation was reached when the *Intendant* of the *Bayrische Rundfunk* summarily relieved his Director of Entertainment of all official duties. On a recent Wednesday evening, in "prime time", Herr Jochen Filser put on a show entitled *Pink*. One of the most popular of pop stars, Udo Lindenberg, recited a Christmas poem in his inimitable manner. According to the *Intendant*, Reinhold Voth, the poem and its recitation amounted to "blasphemy" and were completely irresponsible.

Lindenberg referred to a "*Sensationsfratz*" ("sensational mug") who had just been born in Bethlehem and would in no time at all become "Jesus Christ Superstar". With the help of some "holy ghostwriters" he would soon become the author of an all-time great best-seller. But a gossipy angel cracked, "How convenient it is that nobody realises that he's only Rumpelstiltskin! . . ."

Telephone calls of protest began to come into the Bavarian station, about 50 of them on the evening of the show. *Intendant* Voth got a screening of the "blasphemous bit" in the morning, and took action. He had previously been accused of overlooking similar blasphemies (in a soap-opera entitled *Kir Royal*), and he was setting the record straight by dealing firmly with this feeble bit of fun, this infantile form of fantasy.

Your writers deal with problems of censorship and governmental pressures on publicly-funded television and radio, and less on the independent press. The conflicts occur in a more political context, and less in one suffused (as in Bavaria) with religious and theological sensitivities. I can imagine that your *Spitting Image* television programme spits in all directions, and the Archbishop of Canterbury and even the Monarch are not immune; certainly not the President of the United States. But, if I remember correctly, even your free and wide-ranging culture was troubled by a poem by an established poet which went so far as to imagine some "homosexual secrets" (young Roman centurion, etc.) around Jesus on the cross. . . .

Was it liberty or license? Should we side with the censors, even if it means compromising liberal principles? Should we side with the authors and artists, even if it means endorsing their irresponsibility and puerility? Should we also be defending their right to "bite the hand that feeds them", i.e. by taking the public's money and then outraging the public (or a considerable section of it)?

I AM NOT a Catholic, nor even any kind of believer. But I am convinced that license traduces liberty, and that no liberal society can thrive without mutual respect and sensitivities: with regard to the Jews, the Blacks, the alien Turks, *et al.*

I sometimes feel that our Christian brethren would be getting more consideration if they were actually in a minority and thus entitled to enjoy inviolable "minority rights".

HANS-DIETER LADENDORFF

*Munich*

## Pearce's "Irish Betrayal"

TURNING TO Mr Edward Pearce's would-be amusing book about Parliament, *The Senate of Lilliput* (1983), I found four pages devoted to Enoch Powell, ending with the following (p. 159):

> ". . . in his luminous and sulphurous way, in a permanent condition of menacing civility, he is the leading parliamentarian of the age."

Now ("On the Betrayal of Ireland, ENCOUNTER, February), he is "poor fervent Enoch Powell" of whom "we mainstreamers" would dearly like to "get shot". In the same book there is one quite neutral reference to Ian Paisley and one to "the amiable and not-to-be-underestimated James Molyneux, leader of the Official Unionists". Has Mr Pearce suffered a conversion? Have the scales dropped from his eyes? Or has he been carried away by his own torrent of abuse, confident that the readership of ENCOUNTER has nothing but loathing and contempt for Ulstermen?

Unlike him, I see the Northern Irish—particularly but not exclusively the Protestants—as admirably brave, staunch people who have stood up to seventeen years of terrorist activity with unwavering fortitude. I do sometimes wonder what the reaction of the United States would have been to even a fraction of what the IRA has meted out in the Six Counties. I suspect that they would have bombed Dublin by now.

DEREK BLOOM

*Chelsea*
*London*

## "Ireland-bashing"

MANY IRISH READERS of your magazine are horrified by the contempt which seems to dominate contributions on Ireland in your journal and sections of both the respectable and the gutter British press. Edward Pearce ("On the Betrayal of Ireland", ENCOUNTER, February) has given us a mixture of abuse and inaccurate history about the island I live in. His odd ideas on Irish affairs would be of little interest if a new and vicious wave of Ireland-bashing had not rolled through sections of the press recently. Certain London papers have begun to churn out the usual stereotypes of the Irish as being superstitious, whiskey-sodden, incompetent, and occasionally murderous psychopaths. Ireland-bashing seems to have become a respectable substitute for an older and viler set of syndromes, those of racialism and anti-Semitism.

I doubt if a British journalist in ENCOUNTER (a magazine I admire) would be permitted to write of (say) Uganda, Pakistan, or the American South as Pearce has written of Ireland. He would instantly, and correctly, be tabbed as racialist, self-indulgent, and incompetent. He would also be accused of what Frederic Raphael has brilliantly described in your pages as the British sin of preferring judging to justice. The biological accident that we Irish are white has the effect of disguising the primitivism of the emotions behind these journalists' writings. The usual enduring Irish silence in the face of racialist rant cannot hide the fact that intellectually these journalists are in there with the sad little scribblers of neo-fascism.

TOM GARVIN

*Dublin*

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